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SHORT STORIES

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR HOME AND TRAIN

No. 602. FOR WEEK ENDING JULY 14TH, 1900. [ONE PENNY.

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THE LITTLE PINK LETTER

GWEN was sitting darning a table-cloth. Augusta, austere and spectacled, was reading the paper; Lettice was on the floor staring into the fire—doing nothing.

It was the usual sight in the little house at Earl's Court to find the three sisters thus occupied. Gwen always was mending or patching or cleaning—if not for herself, for her sisters, for Augusta wrote for the magazines, was an adept at short stories of any required style and length, and never had time to mend her clothes, and Lettice would look you straight in the face with her candid blue eyes and say she did not intend to mend hers. She was lazy and she did not care.

"Here, Letty. Here's a chance for you. Get a pen and ink, and answer this," said the eldest girl.

"Answer what?"

"This advertisement in last night's *Echo*. It will do well for you. It is to teach."

"I can't teach," coolly and not moving.

"Then you've got to," with asperity.

Lettice raised her eyebrows to the fire and said nothing.

"Let us hear this advertisement, Gus, then we will decide whether Letty will do for it or not," remarked the small voice of Gwen.

"You needn't put in your oar," cried Lettice, beginning to feel the odds were against her, and dropping into slang, a trick she had if the question of her working was mooted.

"One, two, three, four—go on Gus," replied Gwen, counting stitches.

Augusta settled her *pince-nez* and read:

"'Wanted, lessons on the banjo. Beginner. Lady professor preferred. Apply, J. B., 199, South Square, W.C.'"

"Don't see much in that—besides, I can't teach."

"Don't see much in it? Why it is grand. Here is some fussy, dried-up old lawyer wants to learn the banjo as a rest from his legal work. Capital! I could write a tale about it."

"That's right, yarn away," said Lettice aggressively.

"But why not answer it?" put in Gwen, the general peace-maker. "There would be no harm, and I don't think it is an old man. I think it is a lady."

"Why?"

"Because she asks for a lady teacher."

"Which proves it is a man," from Augusta triumphantly.

"Pooh! Proves nothing. I won't answer it; I decline to teach old men. No woman would learn from me, so what should I do?"

Augusta sighed.

Her sister sorely tried her nerves at times, for she had arrived at the age when a girl has nerves.

Lettice hadn't.

"It might be a young man. Some young men like the banjo."

This from Gwen.

"No, young men haven't got the cheek to advertise for lady teachers. I'd like to see the young man who had the nerve to."

"Lawyers have nerve for anything. He is bound to be a legal man because of his address."

"Well, give me a piece of paper. You are determined to put my nose on the grindstone I can see, so I suppose I shall get no peace till I write. What shall I say? Dear sir?"

"No, you don't know it is a sir. I should say: 'Miss Lettice Blake presents her compliments to "J. B.," and would be pleased to give him lessons on the banjo. Her terms are two guineas for ten lessons, and she is a pupil of Mr. A. D. Cammeyer.'"

"Well, all right, I'll do it. Can I use your pen?" and seating herself at the table, Lettice scrawled in her big, untidy handwriting the note that Augusta had dictated.

"Nothing will come of it," she said as she stuck the stamp on.

"You never know," put in Gwen, who was nineteen years old and had, therefore, great experience in this world.

"Now you can get the tea while I correct this proof," said Augusta, satisfied that Letty had done her best. After all, no one could do more.

About three days after this a large square envelope was delivered by the postman addressed to Lettice. It ran:

DEAR MADAM.—Your offer of lessons received. I will call between four and five to-day and make arrangements as to the time that will suit you best. I would also like your advice as to the choice of instrument.

I remain,
Yours faithfully,
JOHN BERKELEY.

"There!" cried Augusta, throwing her glasses violently upon the table. "Didn't I tell you so!"

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"My bet's off, I thought it was a lady."

"No, I'm right, It is an old man, Let me see the letter; no, it isn't an old man, it is a man of about forty-five or fifty.

"A nice, solid, respectable person."

"Ugh!" cried Lettice. "Fancy giving lessons to a person."

"Well, I'm glad he is middle-aged. I shan't have to sit in the room with you all the time," remarked Augusta.

Lettice's fair face flushed.

"Do you wish to insinuate that should it turn out to be a young man that you will sit like a glowering dragon all the time? Go on old gig lamps!"

"Really, Lettice, your language is getting beyond all bounds. No music mistress ever spoke as you do," expostulated Augusta.

"I suppose if the pupil talks too much you will ask him to hold his clapper!" said Gwen with a laugh.

"No, I shall say 'stow your lip.' That's quicker and sounds more to the point," replied Letty, who delighted in teasing poor Augusta.

"I can see you are trying to tease me as much as you can so I will leave the question, as I know you only get worse at such times. I am going up to town, girls, but shall be back before Mr. Berkeley calls. I have to go up and see the editor." and shortly afterwards Augusta went out.

Lettice tidied herself, put her unruly hair in order, tied a clean ribbon round the cat's neck, and then lit the lamp. Gwen said nothing. She did not believe in unnecessary conversation.

As the clock drew towards four, signs of uneasiness became manifest in Letty. She poked the fire and got the tea things out, making an extraordinary noise with the cups. Then she tuned and retuned her banjo, and rolled and smoothed out the blue ribbons with which it was ornamented.

At last she could bear it no longer.

"Gwen, I feel horribly nervous. Whatever shall I say to this fool."

"Just say 'How d'you do,' and then arrange the time. It's quite easy."

"Well I hate it, I wish to goodness I had never—oh, Gwen, there he is!" as the little latch of the gate snapped to behind someone.

Gwen leant forward and peered through the pattern of the lace curtain, out into the gathering dusk.

She drew back her head, a trifle pale.

"Letty! It's a young man!"

"That ends it. If anyone thinks I am going to teach young men—there's the bell!" And Lettice, feeling none of her customary self-possession, went slowly to the door.

A deep voice inquired if she were in. She said she was, and the stranger stepped inside.

He was tall, very tall, but that was all she noticed.

Silently she ushered him into the little room from whence Gwen had fled precipitately into the kitchen beyond.

"Won't you sit down," she said as she closed the door.

"Well I came to see a Miss—er—Blake about some banjo lessons."

"I am Miss Blake."

The man started and looked rather disconcerted.

"Oh, I—er—beg your pardon, of course, but I fancied somehow, that you were older," he said apologetically.

"I shall be some day. I'm not now," replied Lettice, unable to resist the repartee.

The man looked at her and caught sight of a vanishing dimple in her cheek.

"Yes, yes, of course," he said vaguely.

"You see you did not state the age you required in your advertisement, so I did not think much about it," said Lettice, regaining her self-possession as she saw the young man losing his. "And really," she added, "I think I can teach you as well as an old woman," here she drew herself up to make as much of her height as possible. "My other pupils get on very well."

It might be added, the other pupils were fictitious.

"Oh, I don't doubt it for a moment. And do you think I could learn to play the banjo?" he hastened to say.

"Why not?" with an amused glance at him.

"Well, I'm so awfully stupid about music, you know."

"You are!" she said with an unmoved face.

He looked quickly at her, rather at a loss to know if she were laughing at him.

"Yes, I am awfully fond of it and all that, but I can't read a note."

Lettice gave a low whistle of comprehension.

"I see, that will be longer then," she said.

"Could I learn, do you think, or am I too old?"

The girl laughed merrily.

"Too old! Why you're not thirty, I should think. People can learn when they are sixty years if they like."

"Thanks, awfully. You have lifted quite a weight off my mind. I am so stupid at music, you know."

"Are you? You don't look it," critically regarding his handsome features.

He turned away his head.

He did not like the candid gaze and was afraid he would turn colour and she would see it.

"And when can I come?" he said, looking at his hat.

"To-morrow at five. Will that do?"

"That will suit me—and what banjo shall I get?"

"Don't be in such an hurry to get one. I have two, you can use one until you decide what to have."

"Thanks, very much. You are very kind. Good afternoon."

"Good afternoon. Bring a copy of Cammayer's Tutor with you!" she called after him, as he went away.

Then she did a couple of pirouettes in the passage and ran into the kitchen.

Rigidly seated in a chair was Augusta, her hat and veil still on.

"I hear he is a young man," she said.

"Young, dark, six feet, and very good looking! Think of that, old dragon!" cried Letty, her face flushed with excitement.

Her sister regarded her severely.

"H'm, I'm sorry I found that advertisement now. It did not strike me he would be young and good looking."

"Well, give me my tea then, unless you want me to drink it out of the pot! If I have to work and teach stupid young men, I must be fed up!"

The next day Mr. John Berkeley called again. This time, Lettice, severely trained by Augusta, received him with solemn demeanour and gave him a little rudimentary instruction in the gentle art of music.

"It would not be much good to teach you the banjo until you can read music," she said, wrinkling her white forehead.

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"No?" said the young barrister, for Augusta was correct as to his calling. "Couldn't I learn music without learning my notes?"

"Don't be stupid, could you learn to read a book without first learning the alphabet? It is the same with music. Here is a book of scales, let me teach you the lines and spaces."

He paid great attention, and being a man anxious to learn, he progressed quicker than a child who has to have the knowledge forced into his unwilling head.

Augusta attended once or twice, but the behaviour and deportment of the pupil were such as to calm her apprehensions, and she soon returned to her writing and left these two to work out the fifth position in peace.

Sometimes, if he had been less stupid than usual, Lettice would play to him after the lesson and sing also.

Little coon songs about nothing, set to a pretty air.

At these times he would lie back in the faded armchair and smoke cigarettes and see through a comfortable haze, a very pretty girl sitting in a delightful, graceful attitude, and—and—then he would pull himself up very short for fear his thoughts should carry him away.

"Oh, I—er—beg your pardon, but I fancied you were older," he said apologetically."

It was not long before he was introduced to the whole of the family, Gwen and her eternal mending, and Augusta who was father, mother, and sister to the two girls.

Sitting in his lonely chambers the young man used often to think of the three girls happy and contented, and working hard for a living.

He did not work for a living.

He had an income other than that he derived from the Bar, which was just as well as he was briefless.

An insatiable desire to travel prevented him from ever staying long in England.

An orphan himself with no relations to say him nay, and money at his command, he owned no master but his own wishes.

Lettice and he got on capitally.

She liked him because he had evidently such an admiration for her talent and she felt she could talk to him as though he were an old friend, and tell him her household troubles, and her hopes and fears for the future, secure in the knowledge that he would neither make fun of her or feel bored like some of her male acquaintances, or take advantage of the situation to make love to her, as others would have done.

He liked her because she was charming and had a peculiar and attractive grace and manner which was new to this young man, and she was pretty also, and interested in him, and his feelings towards her were perhaps warmer than is usual between pupil and teacher. But he took care to keep these feelings well under control, for he was shy and diffident with this open-hearted frank maiden.

One day, some months after their first meeting, Lettice startled Berkeley considerably by saying, one day: "You may congratulate me if you like?"

There was almost a wistful look in her blue eyes.

"What for, have you had any good luck?"

"I suppose so. I am engaged to be married."

Something seemed to strike in John's brain like a hammer.

"Married?" he cried aghast, and I am afraid with his mouth open.

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"Yes. Why do you look like that? It seems to have surprised you."

He was almost too staggered to reply.

"Well—er—to tell the truth it has surprised me. I never thought of such a thing in connection with you."

Lettice felt offended.

"Even freaks get a chance sometimes, and even if my nose is long I suppose there is a man——"

"My dear Miss Letty," taking her hands in his agitation quite unconsciously. "You mistake me. But I—that is—er—well, upon my word, you have staggered me."

"So it seems."

"Tell me, who is the lucky man?"

"He lives over there, down that road, and he is a clerk in the Bank of England and has a salary of £200 a year."

"Good Heavens! Are you going to marry on that?"

"Why not, it is plenty for two people, and besides I can't live on Augusta for ever."

"No, of course not, and if you love him there is no——"

"But that's it. I don't love him. Now Mr. Berkeley, do tell me, is it right for me to marry if I don't love? You are a barrister and used to unknotting points, can you tell me?"

John Berkeley felt the case almost too much for him.

"Well, does the man love you?—but of course he does, no man could help it," he added half to himself.

"I beg your pardon. Does he love me? Oh, yes, he is never happy away from me. I like him, you know, I am very fond of him, and I like to go out with him, but somehow I can be just as happy with any other man, so that's what made me think I don't really love him."

"I should think you did not. Have you ever tested yourself?"

"No, how could I?"

"Have you ever thought what you would feel like if you were out alone one night, we'll say at Earl's Court, and you saw the Johnnie was with some other girl, and he talked to her and made a fuss of her, and she was prettier than you? Have you ever thought what you would feel like?"

She was regarding him earnestly.

"Yes."

"What would you think?"

"I shouldn't mind one bit. I told him and he was furious. He has a dreadful temper but there—I suppose I shall marry him."

Berkeley felt sorry, but, somehow, some words he wanted to say would not come out. A little encouragement, perhaps, from her would have helped him, but she was not even looking his way.

"You have not congratulated me yet," she said.

"No, and if you will excuse me, I don't think I will. I may say I hope you will not marry the fellow—who, I daresay, is all right in his way, but not good enough for you. If I ever meet him I will congratulate him, not you."

"Married!" he cried, aghast.

And abruptly rising he went away.

When he had gone, two tears rose silently into Lettice's blue eyes, and overflowing, ran down her cheeks.

The next time she gave Berkeley a lesson they both noticed a little constraint in the manner of the other.

Neither knew whence it came and each blamed the other, after the manner of young people.

Then he gave her a shock.

"I am afraid I shan't be able to do more than finish this set of lessons."

"Why?"

"I am going abroad. I am tired to death of England."

She was a better actor than he, and did not show her astonishment as he had done. She only said:

"Oh! how nice it must be to be a man and have money to go where you like."

"Yes. I have been in this hole of a place for two years, and I can't stand it any more. I am going to try gold digging in British Columbia."

She dissembled her feelings whatever they might be, and questioned him eagerly about his proposed trip and life out in the wilds.

"But you will come back, won't you, soon?" she said in conclusion, with perhaps more touch of eagerness than is usual.

"Not soon. One day I suppose I shall

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come back—but I have no home to come to and no one to care about me much."

"Will you be away years?" in a low voice.

"Yes, years."

"Oh, then when you come back I shall be married. Perhaps living in a demi-semi-detached house at Upper Tooting, with two children in a basket-work mail-cart!"

She laughed a rather strained laugh and then coughed.

He was a singularly dense young man, although I suppose there was some excuse for him, he did not understand the ways of women.

All he knew was that he went away with a dull heavy pain in his heart, and the only remedy he knew for it was a trip to some wild spot. But what he did not know was that he left a sharper, more cruel pain in a tenderer heart than his own, a heart that tried to console itself by looking over houses in the Balham district and which found no relief in the near prospect of tiled hearths and brass curb fenders, bought on the hire system.

"Good-bye, Miss Lettice, you will write to me, won't you," with a pleading look. "Good-bye, Miss Gwen: good-bye, Miss Blake; you have been awfully kind to me—hope to see you again some day!" and shaking hands he raised his hat and went away.

Augusta adjusted her glasses and peered after his vanishing figure.

"H'm! a very nice man. Pity he's stupid. Good gracious, Gwen! Lettice is going into hysterics!"

* * * * *

Weeks passed and months rolled by and the New Chum, Rubber-Neck, Tender-Foot, or whatever he was called in those parts, had settled down as one of the small mining community.

But no letter came. Other friends wrote to him and occasionally he got a newspaper but the letter he looked for was never there.

One day, however, a small pink envelope bearing the unmistakable stamp of femininity was handed out to him, and his heart gave a wild thump as he recognised the sprawling handwriting.

He opened it and his hand trembled. It was a long letter and in some places was rather badly expressed, but it told him the truth that he had never dare ask for, nor knew it was there.

"I suppose I ought not to write to you like this, but Augusta is out and will never know, and it is raining and bitterly cold, and we have very little fire—coals are very expensive—I have kept it to myself and nobody has ever guessed my secret, but I feel I shall go mad if I don't tell someone, and there is no one to tell but you, I would not tell you only you are thousands of miles away and I don't suppose I shall ever see you again. I have thrown over the Bank of England fellow. I am sorry I had to do it, but I could not bear it any more. It was not fair to marry one man and love another, as I love you, was it?—even if the other didn't care a rap for you—because I know you never did, only I felt somehow I could not do it, so I told him. He was very sorry, of course, and Augusta was very angry, but then she is an old silly and didn't know all the story. Didn't know how fond I am of you. How I loved you when you were over here, only you never knew it. There! It is out now and I have read it several times and it has given me the cold shivers. Thank goodness! I cannot see your face when you read it. I don't know now whether I shall even send it to you. It is such an awful thing for a girl to say, but oh, Jack, you don't know how I love you."

"Didn't you stay for the last act?"

Here the letter evidently was put away. Berkeley turned back to the date at the head of the letter and compared it with the postmark on the envelope. There were weeks between the two, which showed she had put the letter by.

Then he went on to read, all about the others, and their little doings. Having come to the end of the missive he turned it back and read it all over again.

Then like the luminary of the law that he was, he folded up the little pink sheets and slept on it.

Next morning he rose with a look of extra determination on his sunburnt face.

Having had his breakfast he went down to head-quarters and made inquiries about the passages for England.

In between whiles he called himself a fool and other hard names for having left England at all.

His impatience during the voyage home was a source of continual amusement to his fellow passengers.

One man of a witty turn of mind said one day, he was in as much hurry as if he were going to be married.

Berkeley turned sharply round and catching the man by the sleeve propelled him swiftly towards the bar.

"What is yours, sir?" he said briefly.

And the man being sensible profited by his opportunity.

When at last, bag, baggage, and all, he found himself standing on the platform of Waterloo station, he could

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almost have leapt for joy. Throwing his luggage pell-mell into a hansom he told the driver to take him to the Weirdor. Having there shaved and changed his things, he called another cab and gave the man an address of a quiet little street in Earl's Court.

Arriving at his destination he rang the bell.

The door opened and a voice said:

"You are home early, didn't you stay for the last act?"

"No," said Berkeley briefly as he stepped inside the passage. "I have come home to hear that——"

Lettice started back with a little cry and leant against the wall very white and trembling.

Berkeley with astonishing promptitude, placed his arm between the wall and her. He thought the idea very neat. He looked down at her fair head resting against his shoulder, and noticed how thin her face was and how dark the lines were under her blue eyes, and he called himself a fool and more hard names still.

"Oh Jack!" she gasped at last, "how you startled me."

"Did I, dear?" he said, devouring her with adoring eyes.

"I got your letter—and I am come home."

"I am all alone to-night. Gwen and Gussy are gone to the theatre, and when you came in I thought you were a thief."

"So I am, Lettice. I am come to take your heart away with me."

"You did that a year ago," she said, giving him one of her old candid glances. Then something in his face caused her to look down. But she forgot to take her head from his shoulder, and he did not trouble to move his arm from round her waist.

"I always told you I was the greatest fool on earth—or I should have guessed you cared for me long ago," he said.

"Yes, I always thought you rather dense," she replied.

"But, however I don't think we'll quarrel over the depths of my folly. I have suffered quite enough, let us kiss and be friends. Lettice, shall we?"

And Augusta said afterwards that it was like a tale in a book, and that after the wedding when she had more time she would write a tale about it.

And she did, for here it is.

Erroll Stanhope.

Willie: "Now that sister is going to marry Mr. Jenks, why is it called an 'engagement,' pa?"

Mr. Underthum: "Probably because the real battle comes later, my son."

Clara (after a tiff): "I suppose you would like your ring back?"

George: "Never mind, keep it. No other girl I know could use that ring, unless she wore it on her thumb."

Mother (suspiciously): "If you haven't been bathing how did your hair get so wet?"

Little Dick: "That's perspiration—running away from bad boys wot wanted me to disobey you and go bathing with them."

Mamma: "Dorothy, do you know you ate my raisins?"

Dorothy (turning over the leaves of her book more rapidly): "Mamma, you told me yesterday some things are better left unsaid. Isn't that one of them, don't you s'pose?"

Little Bobby: "Mamma, the boys is goin' to have a circus. May I act?"

Mamma: "Oh, I suppose so. What are you going to do?"

Little Bobby: "Nothin' much. They is going to have a pyramid of sixteen boys, an' all I has to do is to stand on top."

Mrs. Watts: "That man who sat next us in church put in half-a-crown, and you put in only a threepenny piece."

Watts: "Yes, and he goes only once in about three years, and you make me go every Sunday. If you haven't forgotten your arithmetic, just figure out the proportion, will you?"

Wife (to her husband): "I say, my dear, how badly the tailor has put this button on your waistcoat. This is the fifth time I have had to sew it on again."

"Did you fall?" asked the officious one of the man who had slipped on the pavement.

"Fall?" roared the man, witheringly; "no; I merely sat down to think over the situation in South Africa."

As the family were at dinner the news of the death of a distant relative was received. Little Nellie looked longingly at her well-filled plate, and said:

"Papa, must we be sorry now or can we wait until after we finish eating?"

"Mrs. Higgins is still wildly in love with her husband."

"Does she put the buttons on his shirts for him yet?"

"No; but he told her he sat up all night playing cards without any stakes—and she believes him."

"Did you ever," asked the young husband, "have your wife look you in the eyes when you came home and ask you if you had not forgotten something?"

"Many a time, my boy," answered the old married man. "She does yet. In the early days it used to mean a kiss; now it is usually a reference to wiping my shoes."

"What a wonderful painter Rubens was," remarked Mr. Jones at the art gallery.

"Yes," assented Mrs. Jones. "It is said of him that he could change a laughing face into a sad one by a single stroke."

"Why," spoke up little Johnny, in disgust, "my schoolmaster can do that."

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The Rajah's Vengeance.

AN INCIDENT IN THE INDIAN MUTINY.

It was the summer of 1857, and the world was still shuddering at the atrocities enacted at Cawnpore. The natives of Lucknow had revolted, and the Residency was in possession of the British, who were defending it tooth and nail. The stubborn resistance offered by the besieged was infuriating still further the always savage Nana Sahib, who was striving to devise some means whereby he could conquer and annihilate the hated "Feringhees."

He had imprisoned in a mosque, a short distance from the Residency, Captain Vincent, of the 42nd, and the young soldier's *fiancée*, Rose Deering. These two had been captured when the rising set in, and after Doctor and Mrs. Deering, the parents of Rose, had been brutally murdered in their own bungalow by their own native servants, so deep and subtle was the treachery that prevailed at the time.

The possession of these two prisoners suggested to the plotting and calculating mind of Nana a scheme, infamous in its conception, by which he might bring about the speedy fall of the Residency. Once the idea presented itself he was not slow to act upon it.

The position of affairs stood thus: If the Residency were not captured soon it would be too late, for Havelock, Outram, and Campbell were rapidly advancing to the relief, and might be expected any day. Mines had been constructed from the mosque to within destructive distance of the besieged, the trains being laid ready for lighting. This new idea of Nana's, however, held his hand, and caused him for the time to refrain from applying the match.

One day Captain Vincent received a visit from the Rajah, who appeared in a conciliatory mood. The English officer at once suspected treachery and kept on his guard. The boom of artillery could be heard without at intervals.

"Ah, you hear the firing," remarked Nana, as he eyed his captive with subtle cunning. "Has not enough blood been shed? Your countrymen are obstinate, they are ignorant, they are foolish. They do not know Nana Sahib, they do not know that if they will come from their stupid hiding-place they will be allowed to go free, unmolested. They wait for help, but that help will never come. The Sahib Havelock has been beaten, and cannot come to their assistance. They do not know it. Who will tell them?"

As he said this he looked askance at Vincent, and waited for some indication that his meaning was comprehended. But he only received a glance of contemptuous indifference for response.

"You promised mercy to the women and children of Cawnpore," said Vincent, "did you keep that promise?"

Nana appeared somewhat disconcerted at this thrust.

"What do you know of Cawnpore!" he exclaimed irritably, "you are dreaming!"

"News travels fast in these terrible times," replied the English officer coolly, "and the deeds of assassins go before them to warn."

"I tell you you dream! I offer your countrymen safety, if they will come from their hiding-place."

"They will not believe you, they will not trust you!"

"They will, if you write the message," said Nana, deliberately.

"*I* write such a message!" exclaimed Vincent hotly, "*you* must be dreaming to suppose such a thing. I play the traitor to my own people—never!"

At this Nana's patience gave way, and he burst forth in fury.

"Dog," he hissed, thrusting his quivering face into that of his captive, "do you defy me—you whose life has been spared when others have perished. You shall write, or beware my vengeance!

"Listen. Beyond that wall is the woman Deering. Her life has been spared as well as yours. But it is not too late to repair this omission. Now, if you do not write as I shall dictate, if you do not inform your people that help will never reach them from their own soldiers, that they may go free, that the Nana Sahib in his great mercy will spare them—if you do not write this the life of the woman Deering shall be spared no longer! She shall hang from the roof of this building, and you shall follow her! But not before you have seen your people blown into the air by the mines which are ready laid."

"Surami!"

A Sepoy entered the apartment.

"Let the woman Deering be secured to the rope which hangs from the roof," continued Nana in envenomed tones, "have your men in readiness, and upon the stroke of ten let the rope be drawn up." Then turning to Vincent, he added, "I will give you a little time to think it over—you shall speak with the woman. I warn you do not incur the vengeance of the Nana Sahib!"

A few moments later Captain Vincent was alone. He was in a terrible plight, and mature deliberation could not reconcile him to either course open to him. He was called upon either to sacrifice his helpless countrymen or be party to the execution of the woman he loved.

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He knew the bloodthirsty nature of Nana too well to doubt the sincerity of his intentions. He would never betray his comrades, that was certain. But think how he might he could not conceive any other alternative than the terrible one offered by his merciless captor.

Before he had time to further debate the subject an attendant waited upon him and conducted him to the adjoining apartment, where Rose was already bound.

They exchanged a look of anguish—their sufferings were too heavy for many words. Briefly Vincent explained the situation, and wound up with:

"Tell me, dear, what shall I do?"

"Do, Jack?" replied Rose, sadly; "your duty. Do you think I would receive liberty at such a price? I am not afraid to die. I have lost nearly all who were dear to me, why should I shrink from a fate that sends me to join them where they are gone?"

"We shall go hence together," said Vincent solemnly.

"There are worse things than death, Jack," said Rose, impressively, "much worse."

"I have no thoughts for myself—a soldier does not fear death. 'Tis for you I am concerned. Cannot you escape some way?"

"There is no escape, I feel it. The man is implacable. It is death or dishonour. If you love me, Jack, never write that letter."

"I never will. My own brave lass, we will die together!"

He clasped her in his arms, and their lips met in a long, loving but despairing kiss.

The sun had already set, the shadows were deepening, and night was fast closing in. The attendant who had conducted Jack to Rose now returned and intimated that the interview must cease, and that the Nana Sahib desired to see and speak with Captain Vincent at once.

Jack took leave of Rose, and each felt it was their last meeting on earth. Returned to his own apartment, which communicated with that of Rose by means of an opening masked with heavy curtains, Jack found Nana with two attendants waiting for him.

"Has the Sahib Vincent made up his mind?" began Nana.

"He has," replied Jack indifferently.

"And his reply is?"

"That he will never write the letter that the Nana asks of him!"

"Cursed Feringhee!" burst forth Nana with potent fury, "then you die, you and the woman, Deering, and your people in the Residency! Bind him to that pillar!"

A couple of Sepoys fell upon him with a rope, and in a few moments he was bound hand and foot. He made no resistance, he was quite resigned.

"Now listen to me," went on Nana to Jack, when the latter was left helpless by the Sepoys, "watch the window yonder, and at the stroke of ten you will see the body of your helpless and hated countrywoman carried past on the rope! Then prepare for your own doom!"

And with these bitter words he and his attendants quitted the apartment.

It was now quite dark, the moon had risen and was shedding a flood of silver light upon the mosque. The window referred to by Nana was in the party wall, and lighted the central apartment in which Rose was secured. The rope from the roof was clearly to be seen by the light of the moon, travelling past the window to the floor beneath. It was slack and swung about occasionally. The apartment in which Jack was had no light other than that from the moon.

The position he found himself in was truly hideous and conceived with fiendish interest. No doubt Nana had some idea that his prisoner would give in rather than face the horrors of the penalty of refusal. But Jack was firm against this—he would endure to the end.

It was terrible waiting, the hour before the appointed time being agonising suspense. At last he felt it must be nearing ten o'clock. He averted his gaze from the window, he closed his eyes and tried not to think. He offered up a prayer, and——

Boom!

The first stroke of ten from a neighbouring turret! His heart seemed to stand still, and the ropes about him felt drawn to their utmost tension.

Boom!

He could hardly breathe, something in his throat was surely choking him!

Boom!

His brain was on fire, and somebody must be beating him on the head. He swayed from side to side, helpless as a log. He would not count the strokes, he would shut his ears. He seemed numbed from head to foot. Suddenly his senses seemed to clear, he drew himself up and listened.

Silence!

The tenth stroke was passed, and—Heavens! it was done. He could not look up—the window! He prayed for the speedy hand of the assassin to put an end to his mental torture. Thank goodness, at last, his executioner. But no, a friendly voice!

"Hush!"

A sword flashed in the moonlight, and in a trice he was free.

"Not a word; follow me."

He followed, unquestioningly, into the next apartment, through an aperture in the floor, into the bowels of the earth.

* * * * *

The Residency did not fall and Rose Deering did not die.

While the besiegers were busy mining, the besieged were similarly employed. The latter fortunately struck the mine from the mosque, and removed the charge. Then they explored further into the enemy's tunnel and captured a Sepoy, who was on his way to fire the mine. This individual they bound and gagged, and took along with them until they found themselves in the mosque.

They soon discovered and rescued Rose Deering, who told them of Jack's whereabouts. The Sepoy they put in Rose's place on the rope, and all got safely away through the mines to the Residency. H. L. Adam.

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Mr. Bowser's Tribulations.

XIV.—HE TRIES HORSEBACK EXERCISE TO CURE HIS MANY AILMENTS.

Mrs. Bowser stood looking out of the window the other evening as Mr. Bowser came home from the office. There was a strange man with him, and they were in earnest conversation. He had a half guilty look on his face as he opened the door, and he seemed to want to be questioned, but the mystery was left unsolved until after dinner. Then she quietly asked:

"Well, what have you been buying this time?"

"Nothing at all," he replied.

"Then you've got some scheme on foot."

"There's no scheme about it. I have simply decided to do what any sensible man ought to do. When a man finds that he is the victim of a dozen ailments, he ought to set to and cure himself, oughtn't he?"

"Of course, but what are your ailments? Now and then you have a headache, or you get a corn on your toe, but your general health is excellent. It was only the other day that you were boasting how hardy you were."

"My dear woman," he said as he walked about, "you know very well that I'm not in the habit of complaining. If I were dying, I should say nothing about it till the last moment. I may have boasted of my health, but is it a husband's place to alarm his wife? You now force me to tell you that I have a dozen different ailments at the present moment, any of which may prove fatal, but I am going to make a heroic effort to live on. If you hadn't driven me into a corner, I should have kept my secret."

Mr. Bowser fell on to a heap of ashes.

"I see," she quietly observed as the family cat came downstairs and cocked her eye at Mr. Bowser. "Is it a spring tonic or what?"

"I have been recommended to try horseback riding and this evening I make my first experiment."

"And you imagine you will joggle the complaints away? I think I see you bouncing about in the saddle and the stirrups flying."

"Joggle! Bounce!" he shouted as he turned on her with a gesture which scared the cat out of the room. "You'd be sarcastic if I lay dead in the house! A nice wife you are to encourage a dying husband! Why should I joggle or bounce about in the saddle?"

"You shouldn't," she answered. "However, if you are going to take your first ride this evening I hope you'll stick to the lane and that the horse is a gentle one. I haven't the slightest objection to your scheme. Indeed, I hope it will do you lots of good."

She spoke so kindly that Mr. Bowser recovered his good nature, and twenty minutes later he was with the boy holding a horse in the lane. It was a soft, moonlight evening, and the lane was clear of vehicles and just the place for a gallop.

"Is this a gentle horse?" asked Mr. Bowser as he was all ready to get into the saddle.

"He's like a lamb, sir," replied the boy. "Excuse me, but you are trying to get up on the wrong side. That's better. If I was you, I'd let him walk at first. Some folks are dizzy when they first move off."

Mr. Bowser had climbed into the saddle like a cow climbing over a fence, but as no one but the boy had seen him he didn't feel very bad about it. He had never been on the back of a horse three times in his life, and he was no sooner up than he wished he was down. The boy got his feet in the stirrups for him and encouraged him with quiet words, and after the horse had walked up and down for five minutes confidence was restored. Then the boy said:

"This hoss is one of the easiest trotters in the whole country, and if I was you I'd let him go a bit. When he starts to trot you'll think you are in a rocking chair."

Mr. Bowser doubted it; but, looking over the back fence, he made out Mrs. Bowser standing at one of the windows. She had referred to "bounce" and "joggle," and he felt that he was being tested. He drew a long breath, uttered a silent prayer and chirped to the horse to strike into a trot. The horse obeyed. Had the rider caught the motion it would have been plain sailing, but

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he didn't catch it. There were half-a-dozen bobs, and three or four clutches at his mane, and Mr. Bowser rolled sideways out of the saddle and fell on to a heap of ashes. It was a good boy, and a sympathetic boy who had brought the horse round. He helped Mr. Bowser up, insisted that it was an accident that might have happened to the best rider on earth and in various ways encouraged him to ride again. The fallen rider kicked at the ash heap and struck the fence and was for giving it up, but the boy soothed him and made him understand that he would lose prestige if he failed to mount again.

"I intend to, of course," replied Mr. Bowser in defiant tones as he noticed Mrs. Bowser still at the window. "I don't claim to be much of a rider, but I'll get the spirit of it in a minute. I think the horse tripped the other time. Look through that knot hole in the fence, will you, and tell me what you see in my back yard?"

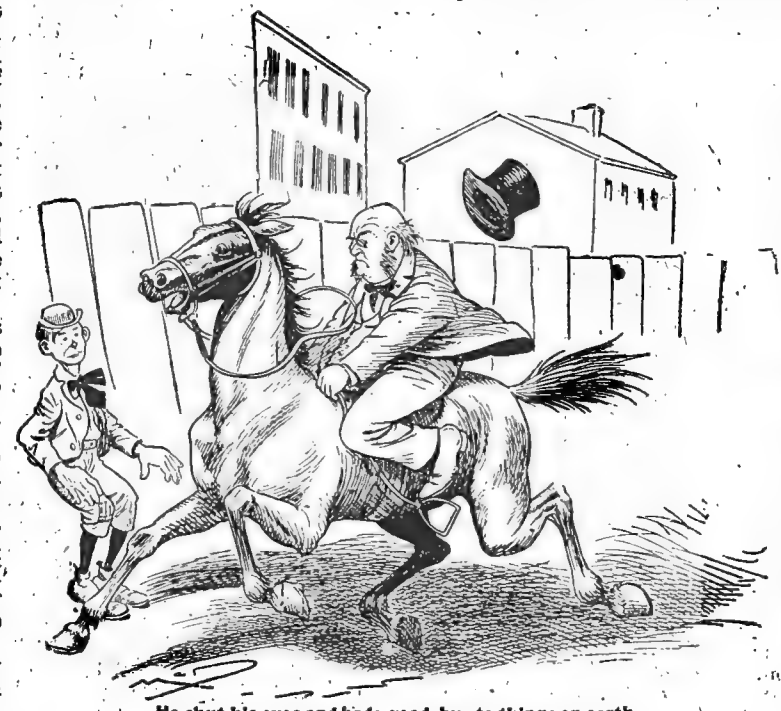
"The cook is sittin' on the ground an' laughin' herself to death," reported the lad after a look.

"She is, eh? Sent out by my wife to spy on me! Well, let her giggle. I'll stick on this time if I have to have my legs tied under the saddle."

"That's the way to talk. When you git into the saddle, jest move with the horse. All ready now?"

Mr. Bowser had another climbing match, but in due time he found himself filling the saddle again. Prudence warned him to go slow, but when he thought of Mrs. Bowser and the cook he determined to run all risks. As he got his feet well planted in the stirrups he struck the horse with his heel, and the animal started away at an easy canter. It was the rocking chair motion the boy had referred to, but Mr. Bowser didn't notice it. He found himself bobbing about and his feet out of the stirrups, and before he knew what he was doing both heels struck the horse and set him off at a full gallop. There was a yell that could have been heard half a mile away and then the rider clutched the saddle, shut his eyes and bade good-bye to things of earth—all except Mrs. Bowser.

The horse set off down the lane with his mind full of wonder, but the wonder soon changed to alarm as his burden lurched about, and before he had gone a hundred yards he made a shy and a kick, and Mr. Bowser went rolling over the ground and came up against a fence like a barrel of cider. It was a long time before the world returned to him. Then he opened his eyes to find Mrs. Bowser, the cook, a policeman, the boy and a workingman hovering over him.



He shut his eyes and bade good-bye to things on earth.

"I think he's coming to," he heard the policeman say, "and you can make your mind easy that his neck is not broken. What on earth possessed him to ride a horse, ma'am?"

"He wanted exercise," he heard Mrs. Bowser reply.

"Well, we'll drag him home for you, of course, but it won't do no good. He'll keep on making a donkey of hisself till something drives him through a brick wall."

Mr. Bowser was dragged along the lane to his own back-yard gate, his back gathering ashes at every step, and it was not until outsiders had retired that he sat up and said to Mrs. Bowser:

"Woman, I understand! I know who threw a stick at the horse and jumped me out of the saddle! Hands off! I want no more of your help, and the cook is discharged on the spot. Follow me into the house. I want you to confess in writing to this attempted assassination, and then we will call in the lawyers and settle matters!"

M. Quad.

[Next Week: He puts in Two Hours' Work with a Neighbour's Boy.]

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How their V.C.'s were Won.

"THE battle was over, and we had won, but the Death Roll was a heavy one, and Roger Simmons' name was on the list.

"For my own part I had escaped with a bullet wound in my hip, and a graze on my left forearm—bad enough, some people might think, but the Colonel had just been in the hospital, and murmured the magic words 'Recommended for the Victoria Cross' over me, so what did I care for wounds?

"How had I won it, you want to know? Well just this once I will tell, if you give me your solemn promise not to pass it on to any reporter. As you know, my regiment, the Irish Fusiliers, were to charge the enemy whilst Colonel Simmons commanded the Artillery, but, when the word was given to charge, and the Artillery were ordered to protect us by their fire, Colonel Simmons was missing from the head of his Battery.

"No one had time to go and look for him, so the next officer took command. Half way up the hill, there was a little boulder, which I was just dashing past, when I heard a well-known voice close beside me, and turning round in the saddle saw Simmons. He was literally blue with terror, a man who had seen service on the Afghan frontier too. I could not make it out, could he be funking the engagement? As you know, he was the uncle of the girl I am engaged to, so I felt it would be best to say nothing, but invite him to take my horse, as his had evidently run away.

"All this occupied but a moment in the doing, and with a look of gratitude that I shall never forget, the Colonel mounted my charger, and spurred to join his men.

"I sped along on foot at the head of my men, and soon we were in touch with the Boers, when a hand to hand fight began. I had no time to try and see what Simmons was doing, though I felt there was more in his conduct than met the eye, for my men were falling thick and fast, through sheer force of numbers. On and on we went to gain the last ridge and get the enemy's guns silenced, but just as I was stretching out my hand to strike down a Boer who was attacking me, a horse rushed past, and in another instant Simmons had literally swept off the man's head with his sword.

"But his face as he turned round, I shall never forget it, it was filled with a nameless horror, as a man might look if he saw a ghost.

"In the forefront of the strife, he seemed to woo death, but fate is ever fickle and would not listen to his advances, till at last, just as the recall was sounded a bullet found its billet in his lungs.

"I was near him as he fell from the horse, and went to him.

"With a great gasp, he pointed to his chest, and said: 'There you will find the explanation, do not let it be known—I did my duty—farewell, Maxwell.' With another deep sigh, he fell back dead, internal hemorrhage having ensued.

"Thus was ended the career of a man who it seemed earlier in the day was on the point of disgracing his long line of military ancestors, and it was with a feeling of deep curiosity that I took the letter from his breast, and transferred it to my own. It was on the way back that I received my second wound, from a Boer who fired from behind a large boulder.

"It was three days later before I felt equal to reading that document, and then I admit that, soldier though I am, I shed tears over it.

"It seems that the Colonel had an only son, a wild, harum-scarum youth, who three years before had gone out to the gold mines, in the hopes of making his fortune, but instead, had fallen in love with a Boer woman, and married her.

"The last his father had heard of him, was that he intended to fight on his wife's side, and a few minutes before the charge, it had come to his ears that the man in command of the opposing forces, that he was to fight against, was a fellow of the name of Simmons.

"Poor Colonel, he had scribbled these lines, as in the first horror of knowing that he might kill his own son, he had slipped out of camp, and hidden from his regiment, hoping for death from some chance bullet. I suppose the sight of me flying by at the head of my men awoke the soldier to a sense of his duty, and the chance I offered him of regaining his place was eagerly clutched at.

"I have learnt since that it was his son whom he felled, and only after severing his head did the father know the awful truth.

"I know the tale is safe with you, for having a son of your own, you can sympathise."

"Indeed, yes, poor fellow, what an awful predicament to be placed in, no wonder he sought death," replied the chaplain.

"But, Maxwell you have not told me how you won your V.C.?" he continued.

"Oh, that was a very simple affair. You know Trooper Maynard, well the boy is the only son of an old soldier servant of my father's and he has only been out here a week. He was killed by a Boer, who turned round as he was flying after the charge just to empty his rifle, and the shot told on poor Maynard, whom it caught in the chest. The rest of his Company were well in front at the time, having been summoned back by bugle, as the General feared an attack from another quarter.

"I should not have seen him if I had not stooped over

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Simmons for a minute, and so got left behind, myself. I just flung the poor chap over my shoulder, and was making my way as best I could to regain my men, when that dastardly shot was fired at my leg, with the object I suppose of killing both myself and my burden. I had to shift him to the other shoulder, how, I don't know, fortunately the fellow was unconscious, so the pain that it must otherwise have caused was not felt by him. That's all."

"Bravo Maxwell, I've heard of many plucky things, but for a man to carry another with his left arm wounded, and his thigh more or less shattered, well, I don't know how you managed it."

"It's the hatred of being beaten that did it, I expect, you see if I had dropped my man, I should have done just what the Boer wanted me to, so I set my teeth, and resolved that we would drop together or not at all till we regained our own lines."

The gallant Captain spoke with a faint tremor in his voice, but a twinkle in his eye, that showed the indomitable spirit of the man as he lay there, in what, his friend knew, must be intense pain.

Trooper Maynard was going on well, in fact would be about again far sooner than his rescuer.

The Chaplain did not tell his friend that he was the other man whose name had been mentioned for the same coveted honour.

But the next time he visited Maxwell, he found his friend with reproaches on his lips at his having kept it from him, and congratulations for the cause.

This was what he had been told:

"There was a little drummer boy, only thirteen years of age, and how it happened no one ever knew, but he was left alone in a bare space on the veld, playing the advance on his drum. He seemed bewildered by the noise of the battle, and stood there an easy prey for any bullet. Nor was he left in doubt long, for a shot rang out and the boy fell, whilst the Boers were about to pass just over the spot where he lay.

"Snatching a rifle from a dead hand, the Chaplain who was watching the fight took in his perilous situation, and without stopping to ask permission, bounded across the veld, picked up the child, and made his way back to camp amidst a perfect rain of bullets, none of which did more than tear his clothes."

As he ran into the British lines, a great cheer went up from the men, and from that day onward the Chaplain would find his way to their hearts laid bare they having once seen that his courage was even superior to their own.

There was yet plenty of work to be done, but the example of such heroes as these two had shown themselves, only served to brace up the wills of others to follow in their footsteps, and win if it were possible that small piece of bronze, which is a soldier's most valued reward.

M. Hoey.

Tommy: "Mamma, why have you got papa's hair in a locket?"

His Mother: "To remind me that he once had some, Tommy."

Little Tompkins (on his dignity): "Marie, I've been a good husband to you all these years, have been patient and have put up with every humiliation, but," fiercely, "the worm has turned at last—you shall not have my son's trousers cut down for me."

"Papa, didn't you whip me once for biting Tommy?"

"Yes, my child, you hurt him so much."

"Well, then, papa, you ought to whip sister's music-master, too, for he bit sister, yesterday, right on the mouth, and I know it hurt her, because she put her arms round his neck, and tried to choke him."

Policeman (on duty in the park): "Excuse me, sir, but isn't that your dog?"

Mr. Portley: "Certainly."

Policeman: "You see what the notice says, 'No dogs allowed in this park.'"

Mr. Portley: "Yes, but that dog can't read; he is very illiterate. Good morning!"

Sue (who has just been asked to play something on the piano): "I really can't play anything."

Tommy: "But, I say, Sue, why don't you play that piece you spoke to me about?"

Sue: "What piece?"

Tommy: "Why that one you told me to ask you to play when we had company, 'cause you know it better'n any of the others. I forget the name."

Then Tommy was sent to bed

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A PRETTY ROUNDHEAD MAID.

AN EPISODE OF THE CIVIL WAR.

WHEN I say that I have taken part in the wars of a dozen different states and have been involved in the intrigues of at least half that number of rulers, you will understand that my career has been far from an uneventful one. Yet, strange to relate, only once in all my numerous ventures and experiences did I fail to emerge triumphant; and, stranger still, this one rebuff brought me my greatest happiness in life.

'Tis possible I owed my egotistical and reckless nature to my parents having both quitted this earth soon after I had made my appearance on it; however, my bringing up proved my undoing, for I quarrelled with my relatives and left England to wander forth and seek my fortune beneath other skies.

Having but my sword and my wits to support me, 'twas only natural I ended by becoming a soldier of fortune, bareing my blade now in defence of the oppressed, now in favour of the tyrant, as one or the other fanned the flame of my ambition, or aroused my mercenary instincts with visions of possible riches.

Nevertheless, however deeply buried it may have been, loyalty must have found a place in my heart, for otherwise I could not explain my having enlisted in the army of Charles I. of England, for I neither expected to satisfy my avarice, nor humour my vanity by trying to uphold so fickle a monarch. But be this as it may, when the news reached me in the Lowlands of the outbreak of hostilities between the King and the Parliament, I hastened to London and placed myself at his disposal.

He received me with the graciousness he extended to all, and so flattered my self-esteem that I swore no matter what happened, so long as King Charles's standard floated aloft, I would draw my sword beneath no other.

In this hopeless struggle, I seemed to lead a charmed life. Although I was in the thick of the fight everywhere, my injuries were restricted to a few scratches. When the Royalist cause received its death-blow at Marston Moor, my clothes were cut from off my back although I had but two or three slight flesh wounds. I must have presented a sorry appearance on the evening of that memorable day, when, my horse and myself smothered with blood and mire, I endeavoured to make my way to the east coast in the faint hope of getting safely across to Holland.

I have always since come to the conclusion that my ignorance of the country proved my salvation; for except that I must travel towards the east I had no inkling of the road and thus unwittingly avoided the frequented routes.

I had ridden several miles along a narrow lane that followed a tortuous line low down between two ridges of hills, and was dimly wondering if my beast would hold out much longer, when, as I turned a sharp angle, a squat red brick mansion loomed in sight, standing back from the pathway and flanked by a clump of trees.

The building was surrounded by a high wall pierced in front by large iron gates.

I reined in my horse and tried to obtain a better view of the place but the moon rising at the back threw it in shadow.

Dismounting clumsily, for my limbs were stiff with fatigue, I approached the gates to reconnoitre before determining whether to make myself known to the inhabitants.

I was astonished to see no lights in any of the windows, and feared that the house might prove deserted, but, on again peering between the bars of the gate, noticed that the lawn showed signs of recent gardening care.

Leaving my animal to look after itself, I opened the gate, and walked inside. I now saw that one of the ground floor windows was only partly closed.

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I was barely six paces from the window when the moonlight gleamed on the barrel of a pistol and a small white hand just within the casement. Astonishment mastered me for an instant, and I stood there gaping like a fool.

An order to remain where I was, given in a feminine voice, recalled me to my senses.

"Madam," said I, whipping off my shabby beaver, "whoever you are I pray you give me a morsel to eat and let me rest awhile, I——"

My speech was cut short by a second command, this time to throw away my sword.

Ever reckless, I hastily unsheathed my blade and sent it flying over the lawn.

"Madam, I have fought half the day and ridden the other half without food," I cried appealingly, approaching the window to get a sight of my interlocutor.

It was instantly slammed to and bolted.

Mad with anger at the trick that I thought had been played upon me, I was about to thrust my scabbard through the glass when I heard the front door being unfastened.

I ran round to the porch to find the door open and a young woman with a lighted candle, on the threshold.

Finger to lip she bade me enter.

I obeyed with alacrity, and found myself in a large square hall adorned with arms and trophies of the hunt. Following my guide, who was enveloped in a hooded cloak, I crossed the hall and proceeded along a corridor evidently leading to the servants' quarters. Everything was in darkness but for the light the maid carried.

She passed into a large kitchen, went to a cupboard and took out some viands and a mug of beer.

She had not yet addressed a word to me and I watched her silently, with, I fear, little thought save for the food she placed before me and which I ate greedily.

While I was eating she pulled a chair up to the table opposite me and, slipping off her cloak, sat down.

When I had somewhat appeased my wolfish craving, I looked up and waited for my hostess to speak.

She was evidently of gentle birth and not one of the domestics of the house as I had at first supposed. Slender and of average height, this fair maid was hardly twenty years of age. She wore a becoming gown of some cream-coloured stuff, the bodice cut low, exposing the shapely throat, white as the string of pearls that clasped it.

With her elbows on the table, and her pretty face supported in the palms of her hands, I thought she made the sweetest picture it had ever been my fortune to behold.

"Since you have satisfied your hunger, sir," she said, "you will perhaps not object to do the same for my curiosity."

"Permit me but one question and I will gladly answer any you may choose to put to me, Madam. Has the King or the Parliament the honour of your favour?"

"I do not meddle with politics, sir, but rumours of an impending conflict reached us and I could not rest. Our house lies off the beaten track and we gladly give food and shelter to any travellers who may stray this way. But these are troublous times and my uncle, with whom I live here, gives his support to the Parliamentary cause. If, as I suppose, you represent his enemies, you must not stay here. Both he and the servants have retired for the night, but at any moment one or the other might awake and come down."

"The rumours that disturbed your sleep, Madam were well founded," I said, grateful for the chances that had thus befriended me; and I told her of the morning's fight and its issue.

"Where have you left your horse?" she suddenly asked, when I had finished speaking.

"In the lane!"

"'Twill never do there; 'twould arouse suspicion should chance bring another this way."

I sprang up, shamed by her forethought, went out, and led the animal to the rear of the building, where I tethered it to a post.

Having obtained permission from her to fetch my sword, I picked it up and crept noiselessly back to the kitchen.

"I have not yet asked you a single question about yourself," she said. "But 'tis no time for idle curiosity. Lie down and sleep awhile, and I will keep watch. Should no one stir, you shall sleep on for three or four hours, and then you must be up and away. 'Tis but a poor bed you will have at best: for I dare not let you quit this room," and she turned to leave.

"Oh! Madam! How can I thank you! What can I say?" I exclaimed, touched to the heart by her kindness.

She did not speak, but inclined her head slightly and passed through the doorway.

I remained for a while standing where she had left me. 'Twas the first time I had been made welcome in the house of a foe and it affected me strangely. The day that had promised well, had proved but the crisis of a series of failures, my spirits had been so low that I cared not what became of me; and now—— But fatigue stifled my thoughts; I wrapped my cloak round me and lay down on the floor and slept.

I was aroused by a gentle tap on the shoulder, and sprang up immediately but was hardly on my feet ere the intense stillness of the night was broken by the sound of horses' hoofs on the hard road.

My pretty companion paled with fright, but did not for an instant lose her self-possession.

"You must away before they reach us," she exclaimed, running to a door at the far end of the room and motioning me to follow. She once more put her finger to her lip and I was about to close the door behind us, when we were again brought suddenly to a halt. This time it was a sound in the house itself. The staircase groaned beneath the weight of heavy footsteps, but my fair guide had all her wits about her.

"'Tis my uncle." She turned, and opened a big closet just behind us. "Inside! You could not get away without his seeing you," and giving me no time to reply she pushed the door to, turning the key which I heard her take out of the lock, and her swift footsteps echoed back from the way we had come.

Not being of a patient disposition I was at first inclined to chafe under this treatment, but my gratitude to my protectress outdid my doubt. I folded my arms and leant against the wall awaiting the development of affairs.

Left thus in the sole company of my own thoughts, for not a sound of any kind reached my hiding place, I had ample opportunity for reflection.

As it was, the workings of my brain were more concerned with my guardian than with the prospects of my own safety. I doubted not for a moment that her mind was occupied on my behalf and that she was exercising her wits to help me.

What kind of a man should I have been? I pondered,

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if I had always had a creature like that by my side to help me mould my life. A better one? Possibly. A happier one? I thought not, for until then I had been well content with my lot. But had not virtue and happiness something in common? True, some philosophy had it so. Thus my thoughts wandered on.

But a vision of kind eyes disturbed my meditations, the apparition seemed to claim my attention against my will.

My new goaler approached the door of my temporary prison and unlocked it.

"Be still," she whispered. "You cannot yet leave. A dozen Roundheads are in and about the house. They do not appear to be seeking anyone, but they may remain for an hour or so as my uncle is having a meal prepared for them," and she made as if to lock me up again.

"Run you no risk in thus harbouring an enemy?" I asked vehemently.

"They do say there is a reward of one hundred guineas for the person of every Royalist officer, and untold punishment for hiding one," she said, musingly.

I sprang out of the closet with an oath.

"You shall not suffer on my account, madam!"

She laid a restraining hand upon my arm.

Though I guessed she spoke in jest, it angered me that she should trifle with so serious a matter.

Finding I paid no heed to her entreaties she slid down on her knees, clasped my cloak, and besought me not to give myself up.

"On one condition, fair mistress, that you give me a kiss."

When she discovered that I had been playing with her, she rose to her feet, eyes blazing and bosom heaving with indignation.

"'Tis too high a price, sir; you may go."

'Twas now my turn to be confused. Her anger however was short-lived.

"A truce to play-acting, sir. If you value your unworthy skin go back."

Thus was I reincarcerated in the closet.

In about ten minutes she returned.

"They are all at table; come!"

I followed on tip-toe into a yard and round to the right. She had made sure that all the windows looking in this direction had the curtains down. Once safe from observation, I soon found my horse.

Here was fresh proof of my gentle benefactress's care. She had stowed provisions for two or three days in my saddle-bags.

I led the beast out on to the highway at the back of the house, where she accompanied me, giving instructions to enable me to pursue my journey to the coast. When she had finished and it was time to mount, I hesitated.

My life ahead looked so empty and dreary after the last few hours. I could not leave her thus, and, perchance, never set eyes on her again.

"Why do you wait; there is danger in delay?"

"We do not even know each other's names," I said lamely.

"Mine is Margaret Hanworth."

"And mine, madam, Neil Bransome, at your service." In a few words, I told her of my past career and what was before me should I get safely out of England. "But in a while I shall return, and will come back if I may hope for your assistance to start life anew."

"I fear you over-rate my help," she answered, looking on the ground.

"Do not refuse it," I pleaded. "'Tis all the world to me."

She did not reply, but stood fidgeting a stone with her tiny foot.

"Shall I come back a free man and seek the acquaintance of your uncle," I urged. "Say the word, madam, and I will wear your image in my heart of hearts."

"I have already burdened my soul with too many falsehoods on your behalf to care to add to them. Farewell, sir!" she said smiling, and then, without waiting for me to speak, ran back out of sight, turning to wave her hand she disappeared. Something white fell to the ground as she ran. It was her glove.

My heart leaped as I picked up her gage and kissed it fervently. Then I sprang on my horse, and, waving my beaver for joy, flew towards the coast.

GEOFFRY RHODES.

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EINAR OF THE LONG SWORD.

. . By George C. Wallis . .

Author of "The Winning of Gunhild," "The Gladiator," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XI.

How Sigmund the Skald went over Saddleback Ridge.

I told none of my purpose, but drew all within the house by persuasion, and sang them a saga that was likely to find them food for talk. Then I sought out a house-carle I had once befriended named Norri, and bringing a couple of ponies from the stables, we mounted and rode forth.

I glanced back at the homestead a many times, fearing lest we should be seen and Sweyn should send after us, but all was silent, and presently the sky was overcast and we were safe. We put the ponies to the trot then, but in the face of the gale that swept down upon us it was hard for the animals to keep their pace. If the wind was shrill and cold in the garth it was tenfold shriller and colder as we went up the long hill. It shrieked and howled around us dismally; its chilliness bit us to the bone.

"Whither go we, skald?" asked Norri. "But for your claim on me it would not have been so easy to draw me from the fire to-day."

"I go to Trollfell," said I, "to get the use of Othnar's ship, *Long Dragon*, so that we may sail in pursuit of Alfdane."

"'Tis a brave thought, but, methinks, a vain one," said Norri. "But why need I go? And look there on Saddleback; it is white with snow, and no horse can get across."

"Leave that to me, Norri," said I. "I have a deed to do to-day."

The carle ceased grumbling openly and we rode on in silence, the gale increasing in rage and coldness ever as we rose. At last we came to a piece of level ground where its full fury burst upon us, and so icy and fierce was its breath that the warm blood in us seemed to burn the cold flesh through which it ran.

The ponies, steaming with exertion, could scarcely stagger across to the shelter of the rock on the farther side of the flat. There we rested them awhile, bringing some slight glow into our hands by violent exercise, then began the hill again. When we came to the top, where the real danger lay, it was rapidly growing dusk.

At the top of the hill, where on a clear day one may look down and see both Raven's-nest and Trollfell with but a turn of the head, the path narrows to a footway, and rises and falls in a double curve like a saddle. This it is that is called Saddleback Ridge.

On the right of the ridge the rock breaks away and goes sheer down to a fork of the fiord, a swallow's flight, and on the left is a treacherous bog that reaches to the margin of an inland lake, from whence, in winter time, a torrent springs. To come at Trollfell from Raven's-nest, except by Saddleback, would mean a journey of at least double length, and always uncertain because of the flushing of the torrent.

And on Saddleback, even in the summer, it is chill, and the white frosts sparkle in the mornings. In winter it glistens with ice and snow of daily-increasing thickness.

I sprang from the pony and looked across. It was white and smooth and hard, and so steep and narrow in the hollow of it that it seemed impossible any man should creep along it let him go as carefully as he might.

"Now here we must turn back," said Norri. "Neither man nor horse may cross Saddleback Ridge when Thrymm's white mantle is cast over it."

"That we will see," said I, binding on my feet a pair of wrestling shoes that I had brought. "Though I have to creep I have a mind to get down to Trollfell to beg Othnar Wolf'sfang's ship that we may rescue Astrid. You will see now, Norri, why I brought you. You will be able to go back and tell them that I have got across, and my purpose, and to be ready at the landing-stage at dawn. I brought the horses to gain time, and you should have no trouble returning with the wind at your back. Waste no more words on your wonder now, but watch."

He cowered behind the nearest rock at my bidding, the ponies standing tail-to-wind, and I walked out on the white ridge. At first I went easily, for there was a lull in the gale, and the surface was level, but when I came to the downward slope, whose roughnesses were coated with ice and held hard snow between them, I had to be more wary.

I stumbled often, and once Norri shouted with fear, thinking I had lost myself, but I got safely to the lowest part of the saddle. I rested there a moment to regain my breath, which was not easy facing that fierce wind, though I was warm now with excitement; then I began the ascent.

The Trollfell side was the worst of the two, and now I caught the full force of the storm, and white flakes began to fall slowly. It was all that I could do to keep foothold, and at last I had to go down and creep stealthily as a cat, rising but a little with each move. And ever as I rose I met a stronger wind, and now it bore keen ice needles and hard snow dust in its mad whirls, pricking my face and blinding me. Yet I thought of Astrid and Einar, and of Bifrost Bridge, that was barred to me unless I kept on, and I went up slowly.

Now I was almost at the top of the rising curve when the weakness that has beset me since I can remember came upon me. It was like a heavy blow on the back, and it unloosed every muscle that I had on the strain. I let go of the rock ahead, and slid back to the cup of the ridge again, and heard Norri's second cry of fear, though to me it was faint and far-off. An instant I hung there despairing, thinking that all men have a time and that mine had come and it was no use striving against the Nornas, and then the spasm passed, and I crept up again.

Once I glanced above, and through the dim hail I thought I saw a gigantic white form beckoning me on. I looked again when I had risen another step, and it was still there, and this time I saw its face distinctly, and knew that it was the ghost of Harald, Einar's father. He was in full armour, and in his right hand, white and vaporous, was the semblance of a long sword. With this he waved me upwards, pointing ever and anon behind him, but his lips were closed firm so that he spoke not at all.

"Othnar's garth is well called Trollfell," said I, "since trolls beckon one to it. But troll or fey I care not so long as it tends to good."

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Thus saying I went up steadily, as though nerved with fresh strength, keeping myself flat on the slippery rock so that the howling wind could not tear me off, and Harald, still waving his sword, stepped back as I stepped up. At last I came to the top and pulled myself over and went down the further slope, and so was safe upon the mountain side where the path lies easy down to Trollfell.

The ghost vanished suddenly then, and I shouted across to Norri to do what I had told him. He obeyed at once, nothing loth to be stirring, and I made all speed on my way. But there was the strangeness about the troll; that though Norri had been watching me all the time he had seen nothing of it.

It was very dark when I came to Othnar Wolf'sfang's, and his hall was noisy with song and mirth and the crackle of pine logs. Everyone stared when I went in, and Othnar most of all.

"'Tis a queer night for Sigmund the Weak to be afoot," cried he, "yet no man is more welcome here to-night. We have no skald like you in these parts, and my men are in the mind for jolly songs. We sail on Viking path to-morrow with a taut ship and a staunch crew. We are tired of home-staying, and are thinking of being in warmer waters for Yule. But how came you here?"

Now this was news that might be either good or bad, as Hödr willed, but I thought it good.

"As to how I came what matters it," said I, "so long as I come at the right time and to the right place? Though, to be sure, my way of coming will make a short saga for you when I have got some of the cold out of me and some of the ale in."

They took the hint, asking no more questions until I felt ready to answer them, and then I said:

"I came over Saddleback Ridge, alone, to ask a favour from you, Othnar Wolf'sfang, for old Sweyn, who is sorely stricken."

They sat open-mouthed with surprise at that, and Othnar's great tooth was bared to the gums. He bade me say on, and it would be strange if I asked anything he would not grant.

So I told him of Alfdane's coming and going, and of our despair, and how I had fared over Saddleback to ask him for his ship that we might go in pursuit of the traitor.

"It seems that the gods are with me," I said, "for you have the galley ready and the men also, and you will not have far to seek a fight if you want one. It is a neighbour's quarrel and a just."

"So it is, good Sigmund," the men cried, and one said: "And Odin is with you, or you would never have crossed Saddleback, having your weakness. 'Tis more than a strong man would dare this weather. It is a deed—a deed worthy of Valhall."

"In truth, yes," said Othnar slowly. "It was a brave thing to do. But concerning this quarrel I am not so sure. We need the ship ourselves, and it were ill to risk it in a woman's cause. There is no weregild that touches me in this affair. Yet it was a foul deed of Alfdane's, and a brave one of yours, skald."

I saw that he was yet sore because of Astrid, though half-inclined to grant my wish, and when some of his men had spoken in my favour, I said:

"It were ill to risk your ship, Othnar, and it is not my wish since we should but need it to carry us to Tvedestrof or to Strongness, wherever Hardrada may be. But it were also ill for me to have risked my life to-day to no purpose; and also, Othnar, bethink you how Einar fought for you in *your* hour of necessity. You have no grudge against him, surely, because he has won Astrid?"

He hesitated a moment, but he was good of heart when the need arose, and thought better of his chagrin.

"You are right, skald," said he with a laugh, and then seriously: "To-morrow at dawn the *Long Dragon* sails as agreed, but we will take up at Raven's-nest as many of Sweyn's men as we can hold, and we will search the seas for the nithings who burn ships and steal women by stealth. Yes, we shall make food for the vultures of Hardrada Hardskull and his crew. And now, skald, sing a merry song, and then all to sleep while we have solid beds under us."

There went up a roar of applause at his words, and I sang as he wished, my heart seeming light by compare with the heavy fear of the morning.

And at sunrise the *Long Dragon* moved out upon the dark fiord to the rythmic sound of many oars, and soon we were taking up fifty of Sweyn's best champions, and before the day was well begun were sweeping out to sea. But Alfdane had now been gone a whole day.

CHAPTER XII.

The Doings of Algar Erikson.

When Algar saw that no effort was being made to recapture him, he struck out for the shore with strong, hopeful strokes. Though it was a long swim, and the sea was rough, he reached land. A fisherman coming down to the water-side saw him stagger up the shingle and fall, and drew him back from the wash of the waves so that his breath and strength might come to him. Then Algar got to his feet and inquired for those of his comrades who were left.

"Why, the house is scarcely astir yet," said the fisherman. "They drank as deep last night as though the twilight of the gods was upon us, and they meant not even the clamour of the fight of Ragnarok to wake them. But your men will come to no harm here, Viking. Borg is a man of peace, and whatever Thora does is not made worse by him."

Now Algar Erikson was no shorter of cunning than of

He was in full armour, and in his right hand, white and vaporous, was the semblance of a long sword.

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When it came to Thora's turn Algar barred the way with his sword.

courage, and as he went up to the house he gave much thought to the matter of how best he might rescue Einar. He held himself guilty in having drunk so much, and resolved to leave no artifice untried to undo the mischief his besetting habit had wrought.

Within the house was now much talk and confusion, and old Borg, now that he knew something of the truth, was so angry with Thora that he had bidden her out of his sight. Sullen and defiant she retired to her bower—to look on Einar's sword and to feel wretched because she had sent him to his fate. All were amazed when Algar entered and told his tale, and when he had done some cried out that he was favoured of Rana to have lived so far through the sea. He turned and faced Borg and the household scornfully, having first bidden his men to go towards the great door, and said:

"I am Einar's man, and he and we have done so many deeds that none need marvel at anything more we may achieve. It is well for you, Borg, that Einar is not here with me, or we two alone would wipe out the insult in blood. Is this treatment your usual hospitality to those who have eaten and slept under your roof? Are you a nithing that you let us be attacked in our sleep and dare raise no hand in our aid? Shall I call you Borg the Nithing before all men, and spread the name over all the northlands?"

Borg, already mad with rage, rose to his feet with something of the quickness of youth, and out flashed his blade.

"No man ever came here to call me that who lived to tell the tale!" cried he. "Though I am old I am not that."

"Nay," said Algar, making no move, "I fight not with you, Borg. I did but wish to know how you felt on this matter—I did not say you were a coward. I see now that it grieves you as much as myself, but it is your fey daughter's work, not yours, and one cannot fight with women. Yet because it was done under your roof, Borg, and we were your peaceful guests, you will see that some recompense is needed from you."

To this fair speech Borg could not say nay, and he calmed at once.

"If I can do aught for you and Einar and so rid myself of the taint of treachery it will be well," said he. "Say on with your desire. As to this girl of mine, who has ever been a trouble, it will go hard with her if Einar comes to his death through this. Say on, Algar Erikson."

"It is no light thing that I ask, Borg. You have a good ship at anchor here, which has carried you far in its day. You have also some seventy hale warriors in and about the garth. I have, as you see, thirty, whom the traitors spared. Let me have the ship and the hundred men and I will sail to Tvedestrof and rescue Einar by force."

Now Borg did not like this proposal, nor being made to seem so guilty by a ready agreement, so he answered:

"It is overmuch to ask, friend. The ship has done me good service, and I would fain keep it safe until it rots or I die and my body is carried out to sea in its blazing embrace. And if you take my men away you leave me an easy prey to the first red-hand who sails near. And I am not sure that I need be so hasty in making amends for what was not of my doing."

"That is as you may think, Earl," said Algar, "but time is short if we would do any good. I will leave you a score of warriors, taking fifty only besides my own, and our glory will be the greater. I pray you be wise, Borg, before harm is done."

And his dagger flashed out, and at a sign from him the champions at his back drew sword. There were not more than twenty of the home warriors in the hall, and Borg thought it best to grant the request while he might do so with good grace, so he consented, and bade some set out food for breakfast and others see to the making-ready of the ship, his beloved *Garfreda*.

Algar and his men ate with zest, feeling full of hope again, for one and all loved Einar as a brother, and the men of Borg's-hold were glad to have the chance of fighting alongside such champions. But though Borg had more beer brought out Algar would have none of it, vowing that never a mouthful would he taste until Einar was once more free.

By noon they were eager to be going, but in overlooking the *Garfreda* the men found two great leaks which required mending, and with having lain idle so long she must needs be caulked. Algar chafed at the delay, and had it in his mind that Thora was not ignorant of how the *Garfreda* had

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come by her leakages, but of this he said nothing, biding his time.

It was past noon of the third day when the figure-head was fixed upon the bow, the shields hung along the sides, and the ship was ready for sea. When Algar and his eighty men were aboard Borg and his wife and Thora came to give a last look at the vessel in case any mishap should cause her to be lost. This Algar had expected and waited for, and, to make it more certain, had even spoken smoothly to Thora that day.

He bade them farewell coldly as they went along the gangway plank, Borg and Svenna going first; but when it came to Thora's turn Algar barred the way with his sword, and two of his men drew in the plank and cut the ropes, and the oars slid out, and the *Garfreda* was ploughing the water of the open bay. Thora was taken by surprise, and turned fiercely on Algar.

He met her haughty anger with a grim smile, the sword still in his hand, and Thora, looking at it again, saw that it was Einar's own Longsword, which should have been hanging in her bower. And one of the men near held Einar's great axe and the axe-head that Einar had found under the charred embers of his father's house.

"You would trick the wrong men when you would trick Algar Erikson and his friends twice," said Einar's champion. "None of these men will help you, nor are your parents troubled, for they all know my design. It will not do to raise Hardrada's suspicions when first he sights us, but with you on the forecastle he will think we are friends."

So the galley swept out into the tossing sea and the dreary waste of grey waters swallowed her. In due time she lay off Tvedestrof, heaving idly to the ground swell, and the white frost was thick upon her masts and cords and spars. And now the smile was on Thora's face and the anger in Algar's, for they learnt from the shore-folk that Hardrada had not been home since just before last Yule.

A week and more the *Garfreda* cruised about the inlet, hoping to catch Hardskull unawares, but no ship greeted the gaze of the anxious watchers. Yet one night, unseen, the *Eagle* passed them, bearing Alfdane the Were-man and Astrid to Strongness.

At last, when Algar was driven to mute despair, a ship came hissing round the north point in the midst of a storm that would have driven most vessels to shelter, and she would have swept on had not those aboard her seen the *Garfreda* lying at anchor. She altered her course and tacked slowly in, and Algar saw that she was the *Long Dragon*, Othnar Wolf'sfang's ship.

CHAPTER XIII.

How Astrid Wore the Silver Shoes.

Now the *Eagle* was a faster ship than the *Long Dragon* in rough water, and Alfdane reached Strongness, which is two days sail to the south of Tvedestrof, on the evening of the same day that we fell in with Algar at the latter place.

That night there was great rejoicing in Hrolf's house at the success of the were-man's trick, and loud mirth over the story of the burning of the ships. Einar, bound, kept in a small room near the hall, heard their words and their laughter, and Astrid's voice, and writhed in agony because his bonds held so well. For himself he would have endured his fate with a Viking's stern silence, but that Astrid should be near him and in Hardrada's hands was more than he could bear.

He twisted and rolled about on the floor amongst the rushes trying to break the cords, but they held fast, and the talk and laughter went on unabated. He heard them arrange the wedding-feast for the next afternoon, and heard with despairing joy how Astrid pleaded for his life and scorned Hardskull. And when the night came and some of Hrolf's women took her away so that her tongue was stilled to him, Einar tasted the bitterness of an utterly hopeless fear. In the silence and the darkness of the sunless hours came the helpless terror that goads to madness.

The next day there was great stir in Strongness. The huge beacon on the height was replenished ready for firing, and a watchman placed to scan the sea. The men strewed fresh rushes in the hall, brought plentiful store of resinous pine-logs for the fire, great variety of food and drink from the ships. The women laboured in the kitchen over the roasting joints, and the children, encouraged by their elders, wrestled and fought mock duels on the hillside.

But Hardrada Hardskull spoke ever with Astrid, seeking to win her by fair words before he used force. He promised her much, and when his patience was exhausted darkly hinted at his power. At length Astrid lost her patience, too, and turned upon him with disdain before all the house-folk.

"Do you name yourself a Viking, a son of the sea, a Norseman, one of Odin's men?" she asked scathingly. "Rather should you be named niddering, cub of Fenrir, murderer and outlaw. Is it a *man's* deed to force a defenceless woman into marriage against her will? But I tell you, Hardskull, that I, too, am determined. I shall not come meekly to your bridal chair, and unless you grant me speech with Einar and promise me his life I will do that which will put me out of your power forever—yes, even if I leap into the fire!"

(To be concluded.)

A NEW SERIAL STORY,

ENTITLED:

"WITH THE BLACK FLAG,"

BY WILLIAM WESTALL,

Author of "With the Red Eagle," "The Phantom City," etc., etc.,

Starts in SHORT STORIES next week. Order a copy to be reserved for you, and tell your friends to do the same.

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT BIRDS.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "A Millionaire's Daughter," by Percy White, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source *must* be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. A. Hutton, 3 Lapage Street, Bradford. Attempts for this week's prize must deal with FUNNY STORIES ABOUT Plumbers, and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, July 16th, Post-cards only, please.

It was a Prize Bird.

AN old Scotchwoman had a reputation far and near for her fine fowls, for which she had often been awarded prizes at the neighbouring shows.

During the Christmas season a gentleman, staying in the neighbourhood, and hearing nothing but praise of her poultry, resolved to give her a trial.

He thereupon sent an order for the finest turkey she could produce, and after a little delay was delighted on receiving as fine and plump a specimen as he could wish for.

His delight, however, was short-lived, for on attempting to carve the bird he found it so tough as to resist all his efforts.

Enraged and chagrined, he sallied forth to find the woman who, he believed, had swindled him.

After listening to his outburst of righteous wrath and indignation, the old Scot exclaimed:

"Hoots, mon! Why, ye canna tell a guid fowl when ye see it. That turkey has ta'en the first prize at the show for the last seven years."

A. H.

Flying a Pigeon.

A RURAL policeman walking over Romsey Hills early one morning met a man struggling along with a huge clock in his arms.

After passing the man, he observed him carefully set the clock down and look very mysteriously around. This aroused the officer's suspicions. He thereupon walked back up to the man.

"Hello," he inquired. "What's your little game?"

"Oh, it's all right, gaffer," returned the man, "I've come from Stourbridge to fly my blue checker," and so saying he produced the bird from a deep pocket. "My uncle 'as got my watch, so I 'ad to bring the kitchen clock with me to time him. Our Sal 'll look at next door's."

After which the man tossed the bird into the air, picked up his burden, and trudged contentedly home.

A. W. H.

Answered.

A PARROT owned by a doctor gave signs of possessing almost human intelligence the other night.

A party of young folks were spending an hour in guessing riddles.

Finally, a little voice asked. "Why does a dog turn round twice before he lies down?"

Before anybody could answer, the parrot croaked: "One good turn deserves another."

B. Y.

It Died a Natural Death.

IT was one Christmas Day in a mining camp that a Chinese cook brought a steaming fowl to the rough plank table.

Instantly my pards sniffed suspiciously.

Seizing the bird, I found that the only treatment it had received prior to being thrown into the pot to boil was to have its feathers indifferently plucked.

"Who killed this fowl?" I roared.

Ah Chin smiled pleasantly, and replied:

"Me no kill him, sah. He died all by himself!"

W. B.

Mr. Bowser as a Cook.

"YES, Mrs. B., as the cook has gone I purpose making the dinner to-day myself. I can roast that brace of pheasants beautifully. You may go into town, as, when you get back, I will have the best dinner ready you ever sat down to."

During Mrs. B.'s absence, Mr. B. overdid the pheasants—in fact, roasted them into a cinder; and when Mrs. B. came home he had buried the remains in the back yard and told her that the cat had eaten the pheasants when he was looking after something else.

"Indeed," said Mrs. B. "The two pheasants weighed two pounds apiece, equals four pounds. Now I weigh the cat. You see, Mr. B., she is exactly four pounds. I suppose" (pointing to the cat) "that is the birds, and if so where's the cat?"

J. M.

A Gale Blowing.

A CERTAIN lady having bought a parrot of a bird fancier was shocked by certain expressions it used. She took it back, asking to have her money refunded.

The man refused, saying it was quite easy to cure the parrot. He told her the next time the parrot offended her to take it out of the cage, grasp it by the tail, and swing it violently round her head several times.

On reaching home, the bird at once commenced to use a choice selection of language, and the lady proceeded to "take it out" of him.

After swinging the bird round her head till she was tired, she laid the parrot on the table. The bird then got up, and shaking his feathers together, quietly remarked:

"By thunder! What a gale!"

W. J. B.

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Picked up in the Kitchen.

A PARROT was usually kept in the dining-room, but during the winter was removed to the kitchen for warmth.

When the winter was past it again made its appearance among the family, whom it amused with the new remarks it had picked up in the kitchen.

The first time the bell was rung for something the parrot was heard remarking from his cage:

"Let 'em ring again."

A. A.

A Smart Bird.

AN Irish hen-woman from a Clydeside village went into the Glasgow dog and bird market to sell a live cock which had unfortunately lost an eye in warfare.

While exposing the bird for sale, a man offered her three shillings for it.

"Be off wid yer," exclaimed Biddy, "three bob for a fowl like that!"

"Well," said the man, "it has only one eye."

"Wan eye, did yer say?" roared Biddy; "can't yer see the intelligent cratur is only giving me the wink not to take yer offer?"

W. T.

Then Polly Spoke.

YOUNG HANKINSON (making a call): "You have had that parrot a long time, Miss Laura."

Miss Laura: "Yes, we have had him several years."

"Quite intelligent, is he not?"

"Very. He can imitate almost anything."

"They have a remarkably clever one over at the Casterlins', Miss Laura. It can imitate the sound of a kiss to perfection. Is that among the accomplishments of our feathered friend in the corner?"

Miss Laura (indignantly): "No, sir, he does not attempt an imitation of a sound he is not accustomed to hear, Mr. Hankinson."

The Parrot: "Wait, George, dear, till I take this bird out of the room."

A. L. B.

Rather Vain.

"Do you knew," said an observant gentleman, "that with the exception of a peacock, I believe a canary bird is the vainest of all creatures? Both my wife and myself are very fond of pets, and we keep several of these little songsters always in the house.

"One of the cages was very old, having been in the family for years, and was used as much for tradition's as for economy's sake.

"I had frequently remarked to my wife that I believed the occupant of this cage was ashamed of his shabby dwelling-place, and observed with envious eyes the fact that the other songsters were more artistically lodged.

"Eventually the old cage collapsed and it became necessary to purchase a new one. In order to test my belief in the intelligence of my feathered friend, I made it a point to get him the prettiest little brass house that I could find.

"The effect was magical. No sooner was he turned into his new house than he began to sing as he had never sung before, completely drowning out the music of the other birds and behaving otherwise in a manner altogether becoming to his sudden rise in life."

M. E. R.

"Have You Been at the Raisins?"

SOME time ago in a country house a servant, while cleaning the parrot's cage, was called away during the operation, and inadvertently left the cage door open.

On the servant's return the parrot was out of its cage helping itself to some raisins.

The servant caught the bird by throwing her apron over it, and pulled out the bird's head feathers during its struggle to free itself, causing the parrot to be quite bald-headed.

A few days later a bald-headed gentleman called at the house, and on entering the room in which the parrot was, was greeted by the bird thus:

"Oh! oh! have you been at the raisins?"

R. H. B.

A Ventriloquial Bird.

A CERTAIN collier possessed a linnet which he always maintained was the "finest warbler and cleverest linnet that ever grew feathers."

"Enter him in a show," said a friend to the proud owner one day.

He acted on the advice, but the wonderful bird was passed over altogether by the judges.

"He can't be so clever as you thought he was, Jack," said the friend.

"Oh, but he is," said Jack, "in fact he's a deal too clever. You see, it's this way, one o' my lads at home is a—what d'ye call 'em—a ventriloquist. Well, that bird's listened to my lad till he can do it just as well as him. At this 'ere contest, instead o' opening his mouth he sung wi' it shut as he 'ad learnt, and the idiots o' judges thowt it wor t'other birds. See?"

C. R. F.

Nature and Art.

OLD LADY TO TAXIDERMIST: "You can see for yourself, man. You only stuffed my poor parrot in the summer and here's his feathers tumbling out before your eyes."

Taxidermist: "Lor' bless ye, 'm, that's the triumph of the art. We stuff 'em that natural that they moults in their proper season."

E. H.

Hard on the Old Lady.

THE crew of a British ship that was cruising off the Norwegian coast had a parrot on board noted for its clever imitation of the human voice.

The hospitable Norwegians were invited to visit the British vessel. Ladies were hoisted on board by means of a chair fastened to a rope running along the yard arm.

Whenever the chair reached the deck the order was given "Let go!"

Mistress Polly had been quietly watching and listening very intently to the whole proceedings, and when the last of the visitors was being boarded, a dignified middle-aged woman, suddenly in a voice that was a capital imitation of the boatswain's, and utterly deceived the sailors, Polly cried out "Let go!" just when the chair was swinging in mid air, and to the dismay of the onlookers, down went the portly old lady into the sea!

M. E. W.

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Mephistopheles.

THE Franco-German war was just over when I commenced my medical studies in Paris.

I lived in the Rue de l'Ancienne Comédie, which is just at the back of the Odéon Théâtre, in the heart of the Quartier Latin. I lived on the fourth floor—I and M. Magloire.

We were both students—I of medicine, he of the culinary art. Magloire was an enthusiast; so was I. I believe we each of us loved his particular art, as a true artist should, above everything else.

Magloire had begun life as a *marmiton*. he rose to be a journeyman, he became a *sous-chef*; and then he came to Paris to carry out the ambition of his life; he came to Paris to study under the great Capilotade—Capilotade, the cook of cooks, the Napoleon of the culinary art. He was ambitious, you see, this M. Magloire, my fellow-lodger.

"The day will come," he would say to me, "when my talent will be recognized. The day will come—ah and you will live to see it, my friend—when every fashionable dish will be accommodated *à la Magloire*—soup *à la Magloire*, fish *à la Magloire*, *entrées*, pastry, all *à la Magloire*. The bills of fare of the fashionable restaurants will bristle with *plats à la Magloire*. Discreet waiters, on being consulted by their habitual customers, the great *bon-vivants*, will suggest that the latest style is *à la Magloire*; and the man who intends to dine well will order the artistic masterpiece of his proposed dinner to be confectioned *à la Magloire*; and he will never, never, never repent that decision. The recipes for those inestimable *plats* are here," the little man would say with a self-satisfied smile, pointing to his bomb-shell forehead.

But his art was not his only passion; he hated the enemies of his country, the Germans, with a ferocious hatred.

I believe there is nothing that he would have cooked with greater pleasure than Prince Bismarck himself.

"There's nothing good about a German," he would say, "except his enormous appetite and his wonderful digestion."

We lived in adjoining rooms then, M. Magloire and I, and we had a little box of a kitchen, as is frequently the case in French lodging-houses, in common.

I was only too glad to mess with M. Magloire. We lived for next to nothing, but he always gave me a *déjeûner* of four *plats* at twelve o'clock.

Magloire had not an enemy in the world, except Mephistopheles, the cat of our landlord, who occupied the first floor.

This Mephistopheles pervaded the house; and he was a past-master in the predatory art.

Mephistopheles was a red cat, a fiend in feline form. The measure of his iniquity was full; he had eaten the canary of Mlle. Lucie, the pretty milliner on the floor above; he had devoured the favourite starling of the wife of the *concierge*, and, many a time and oft, he had stolen choice morsels from the laboratory of my friend Magloire.

"Magloire," said I to my fellow-lodger one night, as we were consuming a *grog au vin* in my room. "I've taken a liberty with you; I have invited my friend, Dr. von Wurst, to breakfast to-morrow. I felt certain you wouldn't mind when I gave the invitation; but after I left him, I remembered that he was a Prussian, and, knowing your hatred for Prussians, perhaps I had better take him out to breakfast. Can you lend me five francs, for I am dead broke?"

M. Magloire upset his tumbler over his trousers; what was in the tumbler was hot.

"Doctor," cried M. Magloire, and his eyes sparkled with mingled pain and rage, "when you ask me to cook for the enemy of my country, you insult me. I would cook for the ignorant, for the uncultured, even for the converted cannibal; but for the enemy of my country, never. Farewell, perfidious Englishman, you've hurt my feelings," and he rushed from the room.

I heard him lock himself into his bedroom, and there was a dead silence for full a quarter of an hour.

It was suddenly broken by a confused noise of running about in my fellow-lodger's room.

Then there was the sound of a heavy blow—then a silence.

Five minutes afterwards, there was a rap at my door, and Magloire appeared.

He was very red in the face, and he looked very much ashamed of himself.

"Dr. Labels," he said, "forgive my loss of temper; forgive my apparent rudeness, I have repented; embrace me, my friend. Labels," he cried, hurriedly, "your friend—your Prussian friend—shall not be disappointed. I will do my best for you to-morrow, and for him. You are hard up, my friend, but you still have credit with the wine merchant. Send in a couple of bottles of wine, then, and look to Magloire for the breakfast; leave that to me. I will provide a breakfast

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—such a breakfast!—a breakfast that Lucullus himself would not be ashamed to assist at. But I've one stipulation to make," cried the little man: "I will compose a special dish of honour for your friend, the Prussian a '*civet de lapin à la Magloire*,' a delicious *plat*, but you must promise me not to partake of it."

"You're not going to poison him?" I asked.

"Heaven forbid!" cried the disciple of Soyer; "but I know the German taste. I prepare a special dish for him, and there will not be enough for all."

I agreed to the bargain; I thanked Magloire effusively, and we bade each other good-night.

"Don't forget that you're to provide the wine," cried Magloire, as he disappeared.

At ten minutes to twelve the next day I arrived with my friend, Dr. von Wurst, at my humble home in the Quartier Latin.

On the road, I broke it very gently to him that my fellow-lodger was an amateur cook.

Prussians are very proud, you know; they were prouder than usual at that particular epoch.

Dr. von Wurst laughed.

"I don't care how the food's cooked," he said, brutally, "so long as there's plenty to eat."

As we ascended the stairs, a delicious odour assailed our nostrils.

There was Magloire in his Sunday clothes; he looked much more like a Marquess than a cook.

He received Dr. von Wurst with effusion. He bowed, he gesticulated, he smiled—there seemed something treacherous and diabolical about that smile of his; and I noticed that he never shook hands with the Prussian.

The table was decorated with flowers; there was a written menu upon it. It ran as follows.

Snail-Soup à la Trochu.
Pied de Mouton à la Gambetta.
Pigeons à la Franc-tireur.
Civet de lapin à la Magloire.
Confitures Diverses.

I must confess it, Dr. Von Wurst swaggered in an offensive manner; but my friend Magloire bore it bravely. The German was helped twice to snail-soup.

"We didn't live like this during the war," he said, with a great laugh. And then the conversation turned upon cooks and cookery, and the miserable German was guilty of a wretched epigram. "Every man should stick to his trade," he said, with his mouth full of *pied de mouton à la Gambetta*; "we Germans are soldiers born—haw, haw!—Frenchmen should leave fighting alone, and stick to cookery, the finest of the fine arts; that's where they shine."

M. Magloire made a horrible grimace and helped the doctor liberally to a great plateful of the rich and fragrant stew that he had entitled "*civet de lapin à la Magloire*."

For full five minutes my German acquaintance did not speak a single word. He ate—how he ate!—silently, enthusiastically, voraciously; and then he held out his plate for more. He picked the bones, he mopped up the rich gravy with his bread, and then he had a third helping, and he finished the entire dishful.

"I never tasted anything like it," he said; and there were tears of gratitude in his eyes.

"I don't suppose you ever did," said M. Magloire, dryly.

"France is avenged," he whispered to me behind his hand.

Then the German gorged himself with *confitures* and drank a good deal more than his share of the wine.

"I verily believe," said Dr. von Wurst, turning a little pale, as he took his leave, "that I've eaten too much breakfast."

A dreadful thought passed through my mind. Had Magloire poisoned him?

We were alone, and then M. Magloire began to laugh till I thought he had gone mad; my friend the cook must have laughed for five minutes by the clock.

When he left off laughing, I asked him what he meant by his mysterious statement that France was avenged.

"Swear you will never betray me, my friend, and I will tell you."

I gave the required pledge.

"You have not seen Mephistopheles to-day," he said in a whisper, "at least, not to recognise him. Last night," he went on, "last night he died. I slew him—alone and unarmed I did it. Mephistopheles is dead, my friend; and I have buried him—buried him, all except his skin and his head, in a living tomb. The man—the German man with the unpronounceable name, the man who has insulted my country and my noble profession—has swallowed the mortal remains of Mephistopheles; he is now digesting him. I hope it will disagree with him; but I don't think it will. A Prussian medical student, sir, can digest anything, even a tomcat. Hadn't we better have a glass of Chartreuse?"

S. J. G.

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JOHN TREVELYAN, of Kimberley, was still a young man.

Early in life the young Cornishman had discovered that the prospects offered amid the closed-down mines of his native county afforded little scope for ambition such as his; so he said "Good-bye" to the land of Tre, Pol and Pen, and carved out a name and wealth for himself in South Africa, whither so many of his countrymen had gone before.

That he had been eminently successful, was shown by the fact of his return to his native shores—while still in the prime of life—as John Trevelyan, of Kimberley—John Trevelyan, the South African millionaire—the rival of the Barnatos, and the daring speculator, in whom Africa's uncrowned king had scarcely found an inferior.

And society received him with open arms. Before the powerful lever of his vast wealth, the doors of the most exclusive houses of fashionable London opened wide to him.

Unused to the companionship of women—for he was a bachelor still—he was shy and awkward in their presence. Yet the proud eyes of the Lady Gwendolines or Lady Mauds of society were wont to dwell very kindly upon him.

Though the frank simplicity of his character—out of place as it was amid the artificial surroundings of a London drawing-room—earned for him the barely-concealed sneers of the men, yet every match-making mamma, with a marriageable daughter, found his company singularly refreshing.

Thus, before he had been in town a month John Trevelyan found himself the lion of the season.

The men, who envied him his success, wondered how it all came about, until they knew him better.

Then they realised that behind the shy, nervous manner lay a will of iron, and that it was not brute strength, but a keen intellect and daring courage, which had won him such a mighty share of the treasures of the Rand.

Gradually they recognised that the great blue eyes, set in the broad, good-tempered face, had not the expression of a fool; that the massive head was not a proof of intellectual weakness, but necessary for the holding of the great brain within.

And, too, as his fame spread, a hundred stories of his African career were buzzed about, showing how cleverly he had checkmated Rhodes, or outwitted Beit, often turning his opponent's schemes to his own advantage, in the manipulation of the stock and share markets of Kimberley and Johannesburg. Thus he grew to be recognised as a strong man—a man whom it would be good to have as a friend—bad as an enemy.

Yet in the hands of Lady Mildred Fane, he had seemed but as wax. From their first meeting, the man had been her slave, worshipping mutely, and at a distance, till she gave him the cue to speak. Then, forgetting his humble ancestry, and that she was the daughter of an earl, he had summoned up courage to speak, and gone almost mad with delight at the whispered "Yes!"

Afterwards, when alone and puzzling his soul to discover what the beautiful, high-born woman could see in him—Black Trevelyan as they had called him out yonder, even among the swarthy Africanders—he little realised, poor fellow, how carefully the little scene had been thought out. From the drooping of the white lids, every time his eyes met hers, and the clinging touch of the slender hand, which rested upon his, as he led her towards the paddock, that day at Doncaster, when his horse, Pretoria, bearing her colours, raced in a winner of the Cup, to the moment, when standing by the horse's head, she touched his hand with her lips, in mistake for the soft nose of the noble creature, on which that hand rested.

It was all so delightfully artistic in its unconsciousness—the act itself, the after confusion—that it was little wonder that the man, of a man's world only, was deceived. He forgot the temptation of his vast wealth. That the Earl of Mountford—her father—was poor, miserably poor, he knew well, but that that had, in any way, influenced his daughter's choice, strange to say, he never dreamt. The awakening to him, was therefore, all the more bitter.

It was some time in coming, for his wealth—enabling her to gratify every desire of her shallow, pleasure-loving nature—inspired, for a time, some feelings of gratitude, and kept her true feelings within bounds. It was only when he asked some sort of return, that she betrayed herself. He had asked his sister Mary to pay them a visit. She was some ten years older than he; and, save himself, the last of his race. All the rest, including his old father and mother, whose last years had been made comfortable by his toil, slept in the little church-yard of Portcawl.

Mary still lived alone in the old farmhouse, in which he had been born, and the old folks had died.

He had often enough pressed her to come up to London, but she, shy and home-staying, had as often

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asked to be excused, her woman's instinct telling her how unwelcome such simple homely folk as she would be to the "grand lady," whom brother John had made his wife, and whom she had never seen.

But brother John had been persistent, and at last, with sore misgivings, she had written to say she would come.

It was after reading to his wife the contents of Mary's letter, that John Trevelyan obtained his first glimpse of the smallness of Lady Mildred's soul.

The news of his sister's coming had made him as excited as a school-boy. They had been very dear to each other, these two, and the prospect of making her known to that other one, who had entered his life, and of whom he was so proud, had filled him with delight. But his wife's first words chilled him.

"Really, John, you ought to have had more sense, than to have asked your sister here, in the height of the season, too," she said, a deep frown settling upon her forehead, and her white teeth gnawing her somewhat thin lips. "You know what a lot of engagements we have, and—" with increasing irritation, as he stood silent before her, "how is it possible we can take her into Society?"

"Where is the difficulty?" he asked. "Society made no objections to receiving me, and"—with a generous disparagement of self—"Mary is a thousand times better and more clever than I."

The lady gave a cynical smile.

"Oh, that is quite different!" she returned, "you were a man, you see, and—and—a man of note."

"Rich man" she was about to say, but checked herself.

He read her thoughts.

"You mean that I was a rich man?" he said bitterly.

"Since you put it bluntly—yes!"

"Ah! It is strange, but that never occurred to me before. But to return to Mary. Then I am to understand that you would be ashamed to be seen about with her, though she is my sister, and I give you my word, that she would do you no discredit."

Though stung to the quick, there was still much of pleading in his tones. She might have undone the harm that was done even then, although she had wounded him in what to a Cornishman is a tender point—his family pride.

Instead, she tried an evasion.

"Not quite that, John! Only it might be unpleasant—for her, I mean."

It sounded what it was—a lie.

"I understand," he said, "and I think perhaps the wisest plan would be for me to run down and spend a week or two at the old place. I dare say," with a sigh, "Mary will be just as well pleased."

"Yes, do!" she returned eagerly, relieved to find the matter so easily arranged. "Eustace Lambert will be in town to-morrow, and he can look after me in your absence."

For a moment his love got the better of his mortification, and he caught her in his arms.

"Won't you come with me, Mildred?" he cried. "Spare me a week or two, out of this gay life of yours, and come down with me to the old home in which I was born."

A little laugh escaped her.

"What? Bury myself alive for a whole fortnight in a Cornish fisher village, just at this time too? Why, John, you must be mad!"

The big West-countryman released her as suddenly as he had taken her to his breast.

"Yes, I must have been mad!" he said. "Quite mad!"

A day or two later a Society journal announced in the same column that John Trevelyan, Esq., of Kimberley, had left town for a short stay at his country seat in Cornwall; and that the Honourable Eustace Lambert—

He had summoned up courage and gone almost mad with delight at the whispered "Yes."

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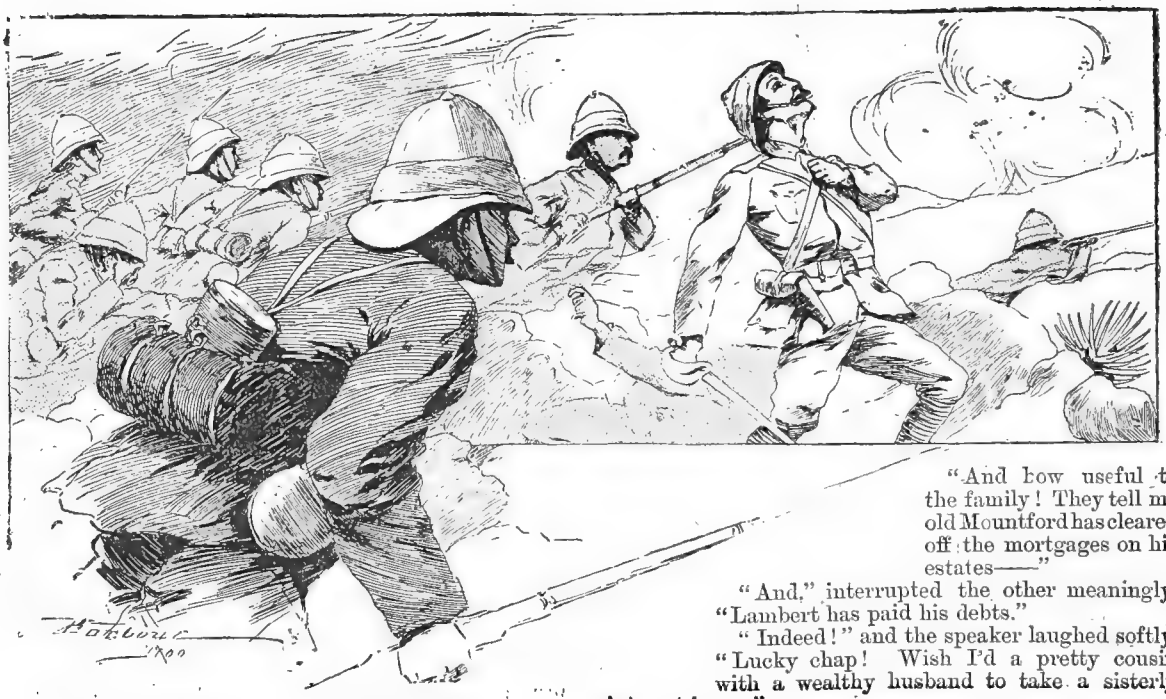

The Cornishman had made himself conspicuous.

attaché to the Embassy at Vienna—had received leave of absence, and returned to England.

It was three weeks later when the millionaire returned.

Finding his wife was attending a reception, he resolved to spend the evening at his club.

It was eight o'clock, and most of the members were at dinner.

The Cornishman had, however, dined *en route*, so made his way to the reading room, where he buried himself in the pages of a paper.

The room at the time of his entry, was unoccupied, but shortly, two gentlemen entered, and not noticing the man ensconsced in a big arm-chair, continued the conversation upon which they had evidently been engaged before entering.

"So he has not yet returned?" observed the one.

The first speaker gave a long, low whistle.

"Uncommonly confiding chap he must be. I wonder if he knows what spoons she and Lambert used to be? Everyone thought before Lambert went to Vienna that they were going to make a match of it."

Trevelyan gave a cough to apprise the speakers of his presence, but in the rattle of a passing vehicle, it was unheard.

The conversation proceeded.

"Ah! Old Mountford put a stop to that. Not that it would have made much difference either way. Lady Mildred liked the cub well enough, but she knew her value in the matrimonial market, and—and preferred a cheque in payment on the Bank of England, to the Bank of Love."

Three weeks before, and Trevelyan would have risen to his feet and struck the speaker senseless to the floor, but now he kept silent.

"And what a prize Trevelyan was!"

"And how useful to the family! They tell me old Mountford has cleared off the mortgages on his estates——"

"And," interrupted the other meaningly, "Lambert has paid his debts."

"Indeed!" and the speaker laughed softly. "Lucky chap! Wish I'd a pretty cousin with a wealthy husband to take a sisterly interest in me."

"Yes, I think you'd be rather more to be envied than the husband. Poor devil!"

"Poor devil indeed!" and the speakers strolled out.

John Trevelyan sat as if carved in stone, his eyes fixed vacantly upon the glowing embers of the fire, his great brown hands gripping the sides of the chair, till it seemed as if the wood and leather alike must give under the strain.

For some minutes he sat thus in silent thought, then a peculiar smile passed over his face, and he rose suddenly from his chair, and with the air of a man who had come to some great decision, strode out of the club house and away.

The next issue of the Society paper, which had previously announced John Trevelyan's departure from town, gave publicity to his return, and stated furthermore that the millionaire had sailed for South Africa, with the intention of serving in one of the irregular regiments, now being formed at the Cape.

* * * * * *

Twelve months had passed.

The Union Jack had replaced the Vierkleur over the Staat Haus of Pretoria.

Once again had the Empire's sons added a glorious—if bloody page to the Empire's history.

But alas! the cost in human life had been heavy, and the tracks of the victors might almost have been retraced by the mounds marking the graves of those who had fallen by the way.

Under one of these raised in the very shadow of the Drakenburgs—lay John Trevelyan of Kimberley; the great mountains which towered above him, forming a fitting monument for the great millionaire who slept below.

The news of his being "killed in action" had not surprised those who had witnessed his conduct on the field—for in an army where bravery was a quality

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common to the humblest soldier—the Cornishman had made himself conspicuous. Indeed, such was his reckless disregard of danger, that in any other man it would have aroused the suspicion that he courted death.

But in John Trevelyan, upon whom Fortune had smiled so kindly that at forty he was a millionaire, and the husband of the daughter of one of England's proudest peers, and the, perhaps, most beautiful woman of her time, such a supposition was manifestly absurd.

So the great world, who read of his death, spoke of the pity of it, that one to whom life must have been so sweet had been so prematurely cut off.

But so many other "great ones" had met their deaths in the war, that John Trevelyan was soon forgotten.

It was only when, six months later, the rumours of his widow's intended early marriage to her cousin, Eustace Lambert, leaked out, that the interest in the dead millionaire re-awakened.

He was dead, and Lady Mildred and her lover were very, very lucky. And so thought Lady Mildred herself, as she and Eustace Lambert stood one bright, spring morning, at the altar of the fashionable church—St. Ethelred's-in-the-west—for no tender feeling with regard to the dead husband cast a shadow over her path.

The clergyman, who officiated, was one of the most talked of men of his time, for his heroic services in the recent war, in attending the wounded, had made him a popular idol.

A scion of royalty itself had consented to stand as the Hon. Eustace Lambert's best man, while the *élite* of Society had gathered to witness the ceremony. Could anything be more promising of future happiness.

With the ring upon her finger, beside that other one placed there by the man lying under the African veld, and the last words of the ceremony still ringing in her ears, as she followed the clergyman to the vestry, Lady Mildred thought not.

Not even when the clergyman—leaning over her to direct her signature in the marriage register—gave a start of surprise, as she signed herself for the last time, Mildred Trevelyan, widow, did she have the slightest premonition of evil. And though the question which followed annoyed her, it gave her no inkling of what was to come.

"Pardon me," he said, speaking in a startled tone, "but is it possible that your late husband was the celebrated Mr. Trevelyan of Kimberley, who was killed in South Africa?"

"He was," she replied impatiently, thinking the reference to her late husband at such a time, singularly mal-apropos.

The cheerful face of the cleric, which, a few minutes previously had been wreathed in smiles of congratulation, became troubled.

"Then"—speaking in grave, constrained tones—"I have to confess myself guilty of terrible negligence—my only excuse for which must be, that the effect of a bullet wound in the head, received during the campaign, has caused me frequent lapses of memory. But"—with a glance of sympathy at the bridegroom, and a second, rather less sympathetic, at the bride herself—"perhaps it will be better for me to call upon your lawyers? Possibly the same firm—Strongall and Travers—who, I believe, managed your late husband's affairs, still represent you?"

The lady inclined her head in the affirmative, restraining her mingled curiosity and indignation, under a mask of cold indifference. But her husband had less self control.

"You have some message from the late Mr. Trevelyan. I suppose? You were present at the engagement in which he fell, I believe?"

The clergyman bowed gravely.

"I was!" he said, "John Trevelyan died in my arms. I regret that I have not carried out his instructions sooner, so that Lady Lambert and yourself might have been spared the shock of hearing them now."

A silence fell upon all within the vestry, broken only by the impatient hum of those who awaited the bridal party without.

After what seemed an interminable silence, the clergyman proceeded:

"It was at Klepfontein where the late Mr. Trevelyan fell," he said. "He was dangerously wounded while taking part in a charge of Brabant's Horse, in which, as you are doubtless aware, he held a captaincy. From the first he recognised that his case was hopeless, and when the bearers arrived to carry him to the collecting station, by his own request he was allowed to remain on the field where he had fallen.

"He stated, however, that he wished to see the senior surgeon or myself, as he had something of importance to communicate. But the surgeon was needed elsewhere, by others to whom his services were of some aid, so I hurried to his side. I found him dying fast, but perfectly conscious. Without going into details, the hearing of which would be of a necessity, painful,"—here the speaker looked hard at Lady Mildred—"he communicated to me his wishes with regard to his property—or in other words, made a will."

Lady Mildred smiled superciliously.

"He made that in my favour before leaving England, and the will has already been proved," she said, "so another was quite unnecessary."

"But the second revokes the first, and leaves his sister Mary his sole heiress."

"What!"

The exclamation arose from one and all.

Had a shell exploded in the midst of the party, the consternation could not have been greater.

It was Lady Mildred who first recovered herself.

"But this is mere nonsense," she said. "I shall make his sister an allowance suitable to her position, but I shall certainly not be quixotic enough to give up the fortune, which is rightfully mine, in obedience to the whim of a dying man."

The clergyman shook his head.

"I'm afraid you will have no choice," he replied. "On the battle-field, the spoken will of the dying revokes all others."

Lady Mildred made no reply.

Like one in a painful dream, she placed her arm within that of her husband's, and staggered out of the vestry while the rest of the bridal party followed.

And those who waited without marvelled much what had happened to cast such a gloom on the proceedings.

But by-and-bye the story got wind, and the few who had known the millionaire in Africa, said they were not surprised; no matter how the game went against him, John Trevelyan, of Kimberley, generally managed to win the odd trick.

H. BARTLETT.

"SEE how I can count, mamma," said Kitty. "There's my right foot. That's one. There's my left foot. That's two. Two and one make three. Three feet make a yard, and I want to go out and play in it."

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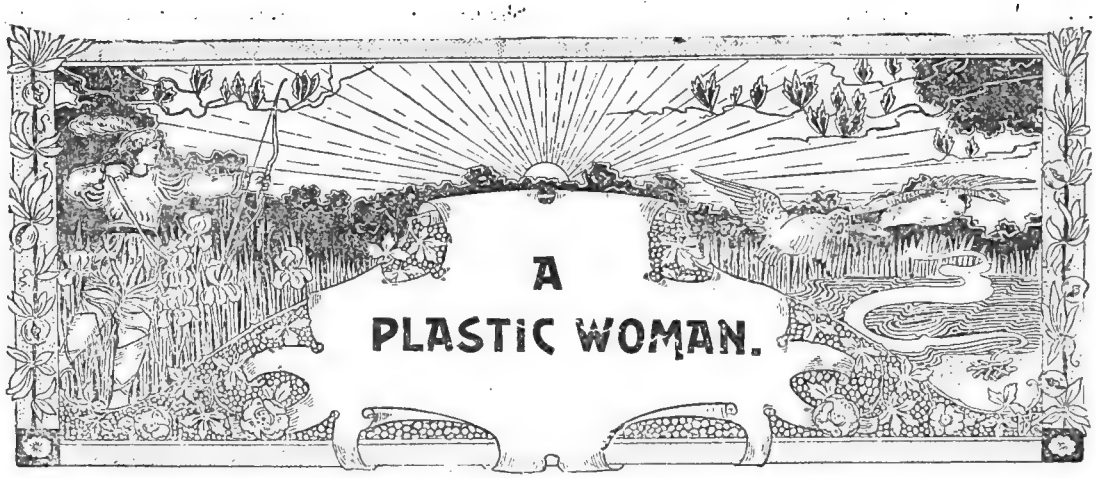

A PLASTIC WOMAN.

For many nights now he had sat up until midnight simply worrying about her, and trying to see a way by which he might place her, his little ailing wife, in some sheltered nook of the world where only the softest winds blew. He was willing enough to face tempests himself, and to forget even Dot his only child.

The night preceding the day of his death he never undressed at all—through sheer preoccupation of mind and utter weariness.

Upon leaving his office early in the evening he had forgotten his hat, and had to return for it, so deep was he in thought. He neglected to light his pipe, took a wrong tram, and had to walk a long way to another that ran crosswise; and, finally, when he arrived home he sat on the bottom stair just dangling his boot by its lace until Dot spoke.

"Shall you take your boots up with you, or leave them down here?" she asked, and leaning her elbows on her pinafored knees looked eagerly into his disturbed face as she put the question.

"Eh?" he asked absently. Then he drew off his other boot, and dangled that by the lace, too.

The little girl wrinkled her forehead impatiently.

"You're not listening to me, farver," she said, "you're just finking!"

The man started, grasped his two boots firmly, and stood up.

"Come along, Dot," he said. "I'm ready."

He turned towards the staircase, his boots in one hand, and the other outstretched for his small daughter's.

She stooped, and gathered her tiny tan shoes into one hand, and slipped the other into her father's.

Together they went up the wide staircase, pausing at every creak, now and again uttering a whispered "H—s—h!" now and again pressing each other's fingers encouragingly.

They stopped outside a door which stood ajar, and the man peeped into the fire-lit darkness of the room. Under his arm the little girl peeped too. Then they stepped softly into the room together.

In an easy chair beside a slumbering fire a thin, white woman was sitting. The firelight showed the hollows under her eyes and in her cheeks. The man stooped over her and kissed her forehead.

"My poor little sufferer!" he said tenderly.

The little girl possessed herself of a white, blue-veined hand.

"My poor little muvver!" she murmured gently.

The woman moved fretfully, drew away her forehead, drew away her hand.

"Every time that child can manage it she gets into this room," she said. "Send her away."

"Go away, Dot! Go to bed," ordered the man. "Why, good gracious, it's after nine—and you up yet! What's Jane about?"

"What, indeed," sighed his wife. "I can't look after her."

"Of course not," said the young husband in a shocked tone.

The child tip-toed to the door. She had kissed her mother's hand, but only on the landing outside did she remember her father, and then because he was beside her, and speaking to her in his gentle, repressed way.

"My little girl forgot daddy," he said, and lowered his fair head to her fairer one. "She is always forgetting him, isn't she?"

He kissed her, patted her head, and returned to the room. Its heaviness struck him again.

"I suppose the room doesn't seem close to you, darling?" he asked his wife, looking tenderly down to her white, wan face.

"The whole world seems close to me," she answered, and began to sob hysterically—"and you come home at nine o'clock, and——"

"I had so much to do," said the young man eagerly, "and I brought home what I could to do later on to-night."

"And you never even asked me what the doctor said, and——"

"I was coming to that, my queen," he said eagerly. "To tell the truth, I was too anxious. What did he say?"

The woman's sobs stilled gradually.

"He—he was most sympathetic," she said. "I knew it was not nerves, though forty Dr. Prings said it was. Am I the sort of woman for nerves?"

"Good gracious, no!" said her husband quickly.

"Dr. Feversham says I am suffering from extreme debility. I'm to have no house-keeping worries—Dot had better go to school; she is six, and very noisy. I'm not to sit reading, or sewing, or practising. In fact, he seems to think I'd better go right away."

Her husband wrinkled up his forehead.

"Well?" she asked.

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He touched her head softly.

"I must think of a plan to make my wee bird sing again," he said. "You decide where you would like to go, darling, while I run over these ugly papers. Just decide where—in reason—and I will work the pros and cons."

He pondered over them next day—until he died. His wife had decided to warehouse the furniture, send Dot to boarding school, and spend the summer months in Cornwall.

"When I return," she said, "we can decide whether it would be better to start another home or to live in a hotel. The last is the freer life."

Merely to think of selling his furniture worried him immeasurably; and boarding school for his wee daughter! He wondered vaguely whether in the plan of things he and the child might not live together. She liked him well enough, he knew, although she gave him none of that absorbing love she showered on her mother.

He left his office, wondering and pondering. Afterwards his utter absent-mindedness was referred to in the newspapers, for he drew back a door and stepped forward to a lift that was two floors above his head. The drop was thirty-five feet and his death instantaneous, so that he may verily be said to have been worrying over her unto the very depths of the Great Shadow.

She sold the furniture, sent Dot to boarding school, and went to Cornwall, for the shock of his death laid her low and brought on an attack of "nervous prostration," as was to have been expected, of course.

* * * * *

She married again, eighteen months later. She was still young—twenty-eight—fragile, and girlish-looking. She had not out-lived sentimental words and ways, and her health was still declared to be "only fair." It was a matter of regret to her that her second engagement was so brief. A "brief song" she called it. She was engaged and married in the twinkling of an eye almost. Her second husband was the city manager of a big iron company and always busy.

On the honeymoon (which was limited to a week) she told him that she was breathless from the bustle of being married, and he laughed at her, taking her face between his capacious hands the while.

"I'm sorry in a way for you to have missed all the bridal flummery you women think so much of," he said, "but we hadn't time for it, had we? Moreover, it would have been purchased too dearly—a lot of worry and loss of money and health—and what to gain?"

"What indeed!" she said, and looking into his face the far-away attractions of the loveliest of gowns were as nothing to her—she was still sentimental.

They talked "plans" on the last day of the honeymoon, and the big, strong-limbed bridegroom lay stretched out on the grass, his bride keeping the flies from his face with an improvised fan. Upon her previous honeymoon the positions of bride and bridegroom had been reversed.

"I think I will leave Dot at school," said Dot's mother; "she used to worry me terribly when poor Arthur was alive."

The bridegroom laughed.

"Why, little woman, that would never do," he said. "To begin with, we can't afford the expense of that school for Dot. You must teach her till she's older. It will do you no end of good to go over your A B C again. Then, I don't believe in separating a child from its

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mother, providing of course the mother's influence is for good."

"And you think mine would be?" asked the woman eagerly.

Even those first and early compliments of his were rare, and longed for by her.

"If I didn't," he said bluntly, "I'd be one of the first to separate the pair of you. Oh, by the way, I've decided for us to live in a house of my own that has fallen vacant. I'll give you a cheque, and you must arrange it as well as it and your woman's wit will let you with furniture."

"Where is the house?" asked his bride, and felt a glow of pride in that this careless big man should intrust the purchasing of his household gods to her.

"A good way out of London, little woman; a good twenty miles. But it's country, and the train service is good and that's the main thing. You won't be lonely, for you'll have your house and Dot and me—enough for any woman to look after. There's a lovely view from the front of the house and a big wood at the back."

* * * * *

It was after they had been in the heart of the country for four months that she had her first ailment—she called it a "return of her debility."

Dot was tender and tip-toed about the house, her little face all puckered up with its old-time anxiety. When her stepfather rushed home at mid-day she held up a warning finger to him as she had done a hundred times to her own father. But the big man only looked at her from under his bushy eyebrows, and said:

"Eh?" absently.

"Poor mother is ill again," said the child. "Come and peep at her. H-s-h!"

But he strode quite noisily to the door indicated, and omitted to take off his boots.

On the sofa in front of the fire was his wife, so well as he could make out for rugs and wrappings.

"What's the matter?" he asked abruptly.

"A return of her old debility," answered the child softly. Then, catching his look: "She's very bad. She has too much housekeeping worry, and I'm so noisy generally and such a nuisance."

"Fiddle-de-dee," said the man.

He crossed to the sofa.

"What's the matter, Allie?" he asked.

"I really don't know," she whimpered. "I suppose I'm beginning to be run down again."

"Good gracious!" he said, in tremendous disgust. "Are you one of those clockwork women, who 'run down' every now and again, and send their relations stark mad."

A flush ran into her face.

"Oh, no," she said hurriedly. "Oh, no, Jim, there's very rarely anything wrong with me."

"That's a good thing," said the man. "Then it's nerves, or biliousnesss. We'll treat you for the latter. Go and fetch that bottle of fruit salt from the dining-room, Dot, and a tumbler of cold water. Now my good woman, get up and mix yourself a dose, and then go out into the sunshine. Dot too. I've got to catch the first train down to the works."

"But I thought you'd come home," said his wife, her lip drooping.

"Only for papers. I'm worried; the men at the works are threatening a strike."

"Higher wages?" asked his wife.

"Yes, and any amount of privileges which they're not likely to get."

"I'll get you some lunch," said his wife, casting aside her wrappings.

"Well, hurry up, then," said the man carelessly; "I've only half an hour. Call me when it's ready."

He forgot her "debility." He tramped round the room, muttering, and wrinkling his forehead, and striking one hand now and again with the other.

And his wife bustled round the house and in and out of the kitchen. She bent over the fire herself, in spite of her debility, and both she and Dot spoke in rapid whispers, in case loud tones should disturb the master of the house.

And when all was ready, he said, "By heavens, the woman in the kitchen can't cook a chop yet. A woman who can't grill is neither fit for man nor anything else; so sack her."

It was after he had gone that his wife opened the cookery-book, and read the chapter on "Grilling."

"We'll have chops to-day, Dottie," she said. "I'll experiment on us, and then when father wants a chop, I'll say, 'I'll do it myself, if it's to be well done.' That's what he always says, isn't it?"

"Yes," said the child, and heaved a sigh. "What a good man father is, isn't he?"

"The best man on earth," announced the woman. "We shall never be half good enough to live with him, Dot, but we'll try. And, Dot, never tell him again if I've been ill; you see, men don't like women to be ill."

"But my own daddie didn't mind."

"No, but he was different," said her mother, and left the impression that "different" was "inferior."

So into the woman's and the child's heart now entered the desire and determination to "live up to" the man they had come to live with.

They gave him a sort of worshipping love with as strong an admixture of tenderness in it as they dared to introduce. The worship he accepted blindly enough, being, possibly, unaware of it, but the tenderness he would have none of, and only met it with rough neglect and bluntness.

It came to be a rule in the house that all home worries must be kept from him, aches and pains be slurred over, tears be covered with smiles, so long as he was by to see.

At the close of their first year of married life, his wife said smilingly:

"Darling, I was thinking all day of your worries. Couldn't you let them slip, and take a tiny holiday?"

"Eh?" he said absently. "It's what I need, goodness knows, but I can ill afford it."

"Leave that to me," said his wife eagerly, "I've been plotting and planning, and saving. I've enough for you to go to Hastings or Eastbourne for a fortnight."

"But you and Dot?"

"Oh, we'll be all right. To us life is all a flower-garden, but you fight the world."

"True enough," said the man. "Well, you'll have to screw down house expenses a bit. A woman and a child should cost very little. Then I'll go."

"I'll be very saving," said his wife. "Only trust me—and take care of your precious health."

And she kissed Dot joyfully that night, whispering:

"We'll pack him away, won't we? And make him get a bit of brightness into his life. Poor father, who works so hard for mother and Dot!"

Lilian Turner.

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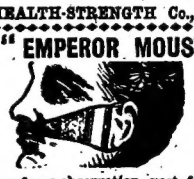

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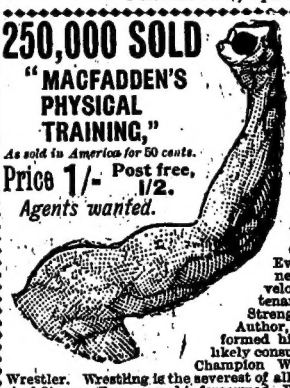

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. . . THE . . .
BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

IN these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solutions of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £2 will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award in addition to the above, either ten of our silver plated pencil-cases or ten popular six shilling novels, to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, SHORT STORIES, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by first post on Monday, July 23rd, 1900.

Readers are invited to submit puzzles, acrostics, conundrums, word-squares, etc., for publication on this page. A gold-plated pencil-case will be given to each reader whose attempts are used. All attempts must be vouched for as original, and, of course, it is distinctly understood that the sender of a puzzle must neither compete in the competition nor divulge to anyone the solution. Any reader found infringing this rule will be severely dealt with.

No. 169.

NAME at least three English words, each of which contains all the vowels and the letter "y."

No. 170.

I AM an article of adornment; change my head and I am part of the body; again, and I am a spice; again, and I am a fish; again, and I am a step.

No. 171.

THE first and third letters, in order, of words signifying: A fruit, crooked, food, a drink, passion, will give the name of a battlefield in South Africa.

No. 172.

RE-ARRANGE the following letters to form a double word-square, the connecting word of which is the name of an English town:

AAAAAAAA DD EEEEEE GG II NN RRRRRR S TTTT.

No. 173.

MY initials, when re-arranged, will form the name of an English general: A kitchen utensil, a flower, a dance, a foreign country, a puzzle, a town in Germany, a garden implement, a battlefield, a means of locomotion.

No. 174.

I AM a word of ten letters.

My 10, 3, 2, 1, is a part of a flower.
My 6, 5, 7, 8, is a piece of water.
My 3, 4, 8, 1, is to cut.
My 10, 5, 8, 2, is a fish.
My 8, 9, 6, is a part of the face.
My 4, 7, 10, 2, is a flower.

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM.
Nos. 142 to 147.

THE prize of £2 has been awarded this week to Mr. William Armstrong, 11 Marchmont Road, Edinburgh, whose solution was the first correct one dealt with.

A copy of "The Reverend Annabel Lee," by Robert Buchanan, has been sent to:

George Ward, 1 Anngir Street, Dublin.
Miss C. O. Baikie, 161 Plashet Grove, East Ham.
W. H. Bailey, 54 Milton Street, Westoe, South Shields.
J. C. Shingler, 29 Lower Breck Road, Liverpool.
Ben Davies, 7 Tanybryn Street, Aberdare.
E. Friend, Eastern Road, Romford.
A. W. Johnson, Woodland House, Manor Road, Barnet. N.
H. Dangerfield, Plymouth House, Kingham Hill, Chipping Norton.
Mrs. Jemima Ineson, Kinloch Terrace, Arbroath, N.B.
Newton Hinder, 44 Brigstocke Road, St. Paul's, Bristol.

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES.
Nos. 148 to 155.

No. 148. Lovers are blind to obstacles.
No. 149. Be kind, and mind you don't tease.
No. 150. Took our forces to seize the enemy's positions.
No. 151. Be underhand in nothing and essay to excel.
No. 152. Be wise and honest too.
No. 153. I excel in obesity.
No. 154. Be in time for tea between five and six.
No. 155. Envy none and be content.

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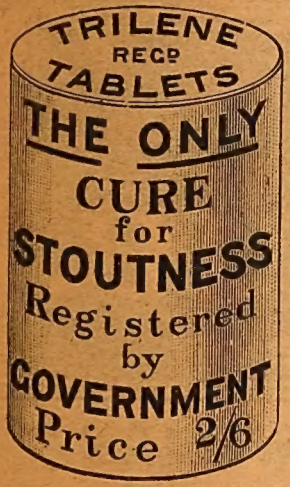

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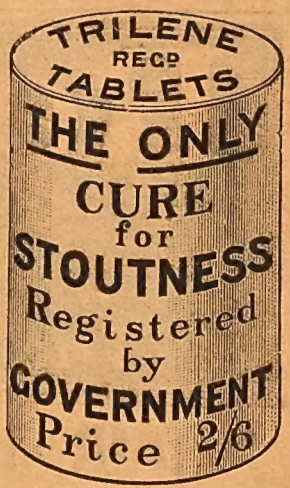

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

MRS. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st. and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 2lib. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me. "Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

MRS. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Riseholme Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

MR. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 11st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

MRS. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44, Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 3lb. to 10st. 4lb."

MRS. H. COX, 28 Walnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

MR. WALKER, 236 London Road, Hazelgrove, Stockport, says: "I have used one box and am 14lb. lighter. Send another soon as possible."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs, says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

MRS E. ALEXANDER, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They have reduced me quite 2 stone, and I am now quite cured."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

MRS. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver nr Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. TAYLOR-ROBINSON, of Tweed Green House, Whalley Range, Manchester, says: "I feel so much lighter and better since taking your Tablets, and am so much thinner that I hardly recognise myself."

Miss A. LONG, of 9 South Parade, Waterford, writes: "Your Tablets have reduced me 14lb."

Miss A. DAWSON, 62 Orchard Street, Weston-super-Mare, says: "Glad to say the Tablets have sufficiently reduced me. I shall always recommend them."

Miss F. L. BALL, 47 Chesterfield Road, St. Andrews, Bristol, writes: "I am quite cured through your Tablets. They improve the figure, and greatly relieve shortness of breath."

Miss PATIENT, of Woodberry, Theydon Bois: "Feel great benefit from Tablets. I have lost 2st., and am sufficiently reduced."

Mrs. DREW, of 1 Bellevue Gardens, The Nursery, Devizes, writes: "I took Tablets some years ago; they soon reduced me and I have not got stout since. Send me a box for my mother."

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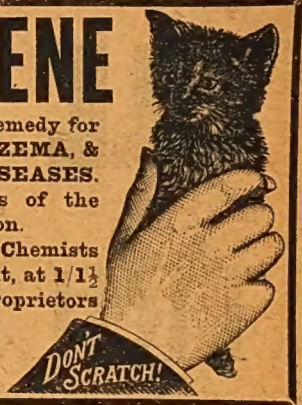

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